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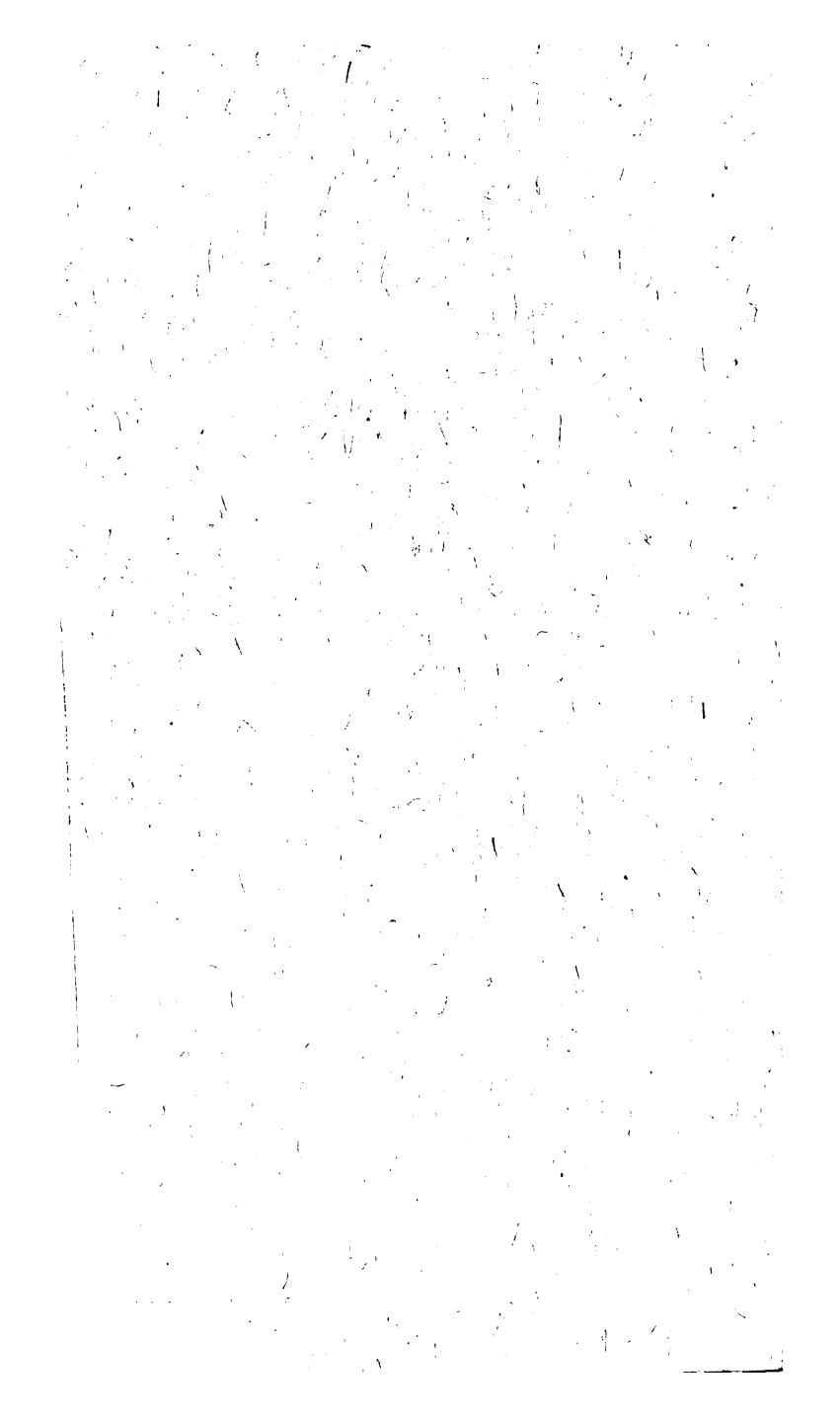

ESSAYS

MORAL

AND

LITERARY.

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ESSAYS

MORAL

AND

LITERARY.

BY

THE REVEREND MR. KNOX,
(Vicesimus)
FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD,
AND MASTER OF TUNBRIDGE SCHOOL.

THE SECOND EDITION,
CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

QUID ENIM EST DULCIUS OTIO LITERATO?
CIC.

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PREFACE.

AN unknown Writer who ſends his lucubrations into the world, and ſolicits public favour, is exactly in the condition of a new man aſpiring to honours among the antient Romans*. They who have eſtabliſhed their fame, are jealous of an intruder; they who are competitors, are angry with a rival; and the unconcerned ſpectators will ſeldom withdraw their eyes from the contemplation of allowed merit, to examine the pretenſions of doubtful excellence.

* —— Populus Lævino mallet honorem
Quam Decio mandare novo.—— HOR.

To enlarge the ſphere of knowledge, and to ſtrike out into new paths of learning, is the lot of few. The world is now ſo old, the ſame ſcene has been ſo frequently diſplayed, and the reſearches of induſtry have penetrated ſo deeply into every ſubject, that it is become difficult, though by no means impoſſible, to produce new diſcoveries, to repreſent unobſerved appearances, and to throw freſh light on ſcience and philoſophy. To publiſh without improving, it may be ſaid, is to multiply the labours of learning without enlarging its uſe, and is like increaſing the weight without adding to the value of the coin.

Yet under theſe diſcouragements, and at this late period, a writer may without preſumption hope to ſelect the ſcattered

flowers of larger plantations, interſperſe a few of his own culture, and place them together ſo as to add to their odour, and give freſh luſtre to their variegated colours. The attempt at leaſt is laudable, and to fail in a praiſeworthy undertaking, is not, in the eye of reaſon, diſgraceful.

The following Essays are the fruits of literary leiſure ſpent in philoſophical retirement. The author diſclaims the motives of intereſt and vanity in their publication. The truth is, he thinks it unjuſtifiable diffidence to keep them in uſeleſs obſcurity, if there be but a chance or poſſibility that they may contribute to the elegant amuſement, or to the benefit of others. If the admirer of moral and

claſſical beauty ſhall adopt one new idea, or correct one error, from the peruſal of the ſubſequent pages, it will be an ample recompence to their author to reflect, that he has contributed his mite in promoting the cauſe of virtue and learning.

With reſpect to the practice of averting the diſpleaſure of the reader by ſervile ſubmiſſion, or by the falſe pretences of involuntary publication, he will not have recourſe to methods which may debaſe himſelf, but cannot accompliſh the end propoſed.

ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE Author of the following Papers can truly ſay, he never meant to claim them. But the favourable reception they have already met with, the importunity of his Publiſher, and the advice of a few kind, but perhaps miſtaken friends, have at length induced him to own, though not without great and ſincere reluctance, the unguarded productions of his leiſure hours.

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ESSAY I.

ON SENTIMENT.

THE character of DELICACY of SENTIMENT, ſo eſteemed at preſent, ſeems to have been unknown to the antients. It is certainly a great refinement on humanity; and refinements are never attended to in the earlier ages, when the occupations of war, and the wants of unimproved life, leave little opportunity and leſs inclination for fanciful enjoyments. Danger and diſtreſs require ſtrength of mind, and neceſſarily exclude an attention to thoſe delicacies, which, while they pleaſe, infallibly enervate.

That tenderneſs which is amiable in a ſtate of perfect civilization, is deſpiſed as a weakneſs among unpoliſhed nations. Shocked at the ſmalleſt circumſtances which are diſagreeable, it cannot ſupport

the idea of danger and alarm. So far from exerciſing the cruelties which are ſometimes politically neceſſary in a rude ſtate, it ſtarts with horror from the ſight, and at the deſcription of them. It delights in the calm occupations of rural life, and would gladly reſign the ſpear and the ſhield for the ſhepherd's crook and the lover's garland. But in an unformed community, where conſtant danger requires conſtant defence, thoſe diſpoſitions which delight in eaſe and retirement will be treated with general contempt; and no temper of mind which is deſpiſed will be long epidemical.

The antient Greeks and Romans were the moſt civilized people on the earth. They, however, were unacquainted with that extreme delicacy of ſentiment which is become univerſally prevalent in modern times. Perhaps ſome reaſonable cauſes may be aſſigned. The ſtoic philoſophy endeavoured to introduce a total apathy, and though it was not embraced in all its rigour by the vulgar, yet it had a ſufficient number of votaries to diffuſe a general inſenſibility of temper. It perhaps originally meant no more than to teach men to govern

govern their affections by the dictates of reaſon, but as a natural want of feeling produced the ſame effects as a rational regulation of the paſſions, inſenſibility ſoon paſſed among the vulgar, for what it had no claim, a philoſophical indifference.

That reſpectful attention to women which in modern times is called gallantry, was not to be found among the antients. Women were looked upon as inferior beings, whoſe only duty was to contribute to pleaſure, and to ſuperintend domeſtic œconomy. It was not till the days of chivalry that men ſhewed that deſire of pleaſing the ſofter ſex, which ſeems to allow them a ſuperiority. This deference to women refines the manners and ſoftens the temper; and it is no wonder that the antients, who admitted not women to their ſocial converſations, ſhould acquire a roughneſs of manners incompatible with Delicacy of Sentiment.

Men who acted, thought and ſpoke, like the antients, were unqueſtionably furniſhed by nature with every feeling in great perfection. But their mode of education contributed rather to harden, than to mol-

lify their hearts. Politics and war were the only general objects of purſuit. Ambition, it is well known, renders all other paſſions ſubſervient to itſelf; and the youth who had been accuſtomed to military diſcipline, and had endured the hardſhips of a campaign, though he might yield to the allurements of pleaſure, would not have time to attend to the refinements of delicacy. But the modern ſoldier, in the preſent mode of conducting war, is not compelled to undergo many perſonal hardſhips either in the preparation for his profeſſion, or in the exerciſe of it. Commerce, but little known to many antient nations, gives the moderns an opportunity of acquiring opulence without much difficulty or danger; and the infinite numbers who inherit this opulence, in order to paſs away life with eaſe, have recourſe to the various arts of exciting pleaſure. The profeſſions of divinity, and law, leave ſufficient time, opportunity, and inclination to moſt of their profeſſors to purſue every innocent amuſement and gratification. The general plan of modern education, which among the liberal conſiſts of the ſtudy of poets and ſentimental

timental writers, contributes perhaps more than all other cauſes to humanize the heart and refine the ſentiments: for at the period when education is commenced, the heart is moſt ſuſceptible of impreſſions.

Whatever diſpoſition tends to ſoften, without weakening the mind, muſt be cheriſhed; and it muſt be allowed that Delicacy of Sentiment, on this ſide the extreme, adds greatly to the happineſs of mankind, by diffuſing an univerſal benevolence. It teaches men to feel for others as for themſelves; it diſpoſes us to rejoice with the happy, and by partaking to encreaſe their pleaſure. It frequently excludes the malignant paſſions, which are the ſources of the greateſt miſery in life. It excites a pleaſing ſenſation in our own breaſt, which, if its duration be conſidered, may be placed among the higheſt gratifications of ſenſe. The only ill conſequence that can be apprehended from it is, an effeminacy of mind, which may diſqualify us for vigorous purſuits and manly exertions.

In the moſt ſucceſsful courſe of things, obſtacles will impede, and diſagreeable circumſtances diſguſt. To bear theſe

without feeling them, is ſometimes neceſſary in the right conduct of life: but he who is tremblingly alive all over, and whoſe ſenſibility approaches to ſoreneſs, avoids the conteſt in which he knows he muſt be hurt. He feels injuries never committed, and reſents affronts never intended. Diſguſted with men and manners, he either ſeeks retirement to indulge his melancholy, or weakened by continual chagrin, conducts himſelf with folly and imprudence.

How then ſhall we avoid the extreme of a diſpoſition, which in the due medium is productive of the moſt ſalutary conſequences? In this exceſs, as well as all others, reaſon muſt be called in to moderate. Senſibility muſt not be permitted to ſink us into ſuch a ſtate of indolence, as effectually repreſſes thoſe manly ſentiments, which may very well conſiſt with the moſt delicate. The greateſt mildneſs is commonly united with the greateſt fortitude, in the true hero. Tenderneſs joined with reſolution, forms indeed a finiſhed character, but it is a character to which reaſon, co-operating with nature, may eaſily attain.

The

The affectation of great ſenſibility, is extremely common. It is however as odious as the reality is amiable. It renders a man deteſtable, and a woman ridiculous. Inſtead of relieving the afflicted, which is the neceſſary effect of genuine ſympathy, a character of this ſort flies from miſery, to ſhew that it is too delicate to ſupport the ſight of diſtreſs. The appearance of a toad, or the jolting of a carriage, will cauſe a paroxyſm of fear. It pretends to a ſuperior ſhare of refinement and philanthropy. But it is remarkable, that this delicacy and tenderneſs often diſappear in ſolitude, and the pretender to uncommon ſenſibility is frequently found, in the abſence of witneſſes, to be uncommonly unfeeling.

To have received a tender heart from the hand of nature, is to have received the means of the higheſt enjoyment. To have guided it by the dictates of reaſon, is to have acted up to the dignity of man, and to have obtained that happineſs of which the heart was conſtituted ſuſceptible. May a temper thus laudable in itſelf, never be rendered contemptible by affectation, or injurious to it's poſſeſſor and to others, through the want of proper guidance.

ESSAY II.

ON THE AFFECTATION OF THE GRACES.

IT has been remarked by an author of ſome humour, that at certain periods there is an epidemical madneſs which rages through a whole kingdom. In time of war, ideal victories and defeats alternately elevate and depreſs the ſpirits of the nation. In peace, the apprehenſion of war, the report of the plague, the fear of popery and the pretender, the dread of a mad-dog, or of a comet, alternately fill every countenance with gloom, every heart with terror, and every tongue with lamentation and complaint.

The madneſs which prevails at preſent, is not indeed of the melancholy kind, but it is outrageous and univerſal. It owes its riſe to a poſthumous publication of Lord Cheſterfield, which is generally read and

and admired. The GRACES are there recommended in ſo forcible a manner, that every unlick'd cub who can make out the meaning, is induced to affect all the finical airs of a fine gentleman. Clowns, pedants, jockeys, country ſquires, and fox-hunters, put off the ſtern virtue of their anceſtors, and begin to rival each other in imitating the mincing ſtep, and liſping voice, of a French dancing-maſter.

As this general affectation of the Graces is a new diſorder, I ſhall take the liberty, with ſubmiſſion to the College of Phyſicians, to give it a new name, and call it the CHARITOMANIA. The following is an eſſay on the cauſe, ſymptoms, and cure, of the alarming diſeaſe; which, I hope, will obtain at leaſt as much attention as the medical caſes which are ſo often preſented to the public by each ſelf-important modern Hippocrates.

A young man, apprentice to a mercer in the city of London, caught the Charitomania, by reading in a magazine a few letters of Lord Cheſterfield concerning the art of pleaſing. Before this accident he was known to have ſpoken in a manly voice,

voice, and to have dreſſed with a decent plainneſs. But now he conſtantly wears his head powder'd and perfum'd, and his coat cut in the extreme of the faſhion, ſpeaks with a ſoft womaniſh accent, affects gallantry with his female cuſtomers, and aſſumes all the grimaces, attitudes, and airs, which form the complete *petit maitre*. Upon conſidering his caſe, I preſcribed a grain of common ſenſe to be uſed in reflecting, that a behaviour, which might become an Envoy Extraordinary at the court of Dreſden, was ridiculous behind a counter in Cheapſide.

A young divine was ſo terribly infected with the contagion, that from being perfectly plain in his external parts, on a ſudden his fingers were covered with carbuncles, his hair changed colour, and ſmelt ſtrongly, his legs turned to a dead white, the exterior covering of his head was contracted to a nut-ſhell, and his whole appearance ſo wonderfully metamorphoſed, that he neither knew nor was known by any of his former acquaintance. The diſorder was attended with an uſual

ſymptom,

ſymptom, an invincible PAUPEROPHOBIA, which made him day and night ſeek the company of the rich and great, and fly from a poor chriſtian brother as from a plague. In the pulpit, he was unable to turn his eyes upwards, but felt an irreſiſtible inclination to ogle the female part of his congregation. I recommended to him, a little cool meditation every night when he went to bed, to be ſpent in ruminating, whether or not the beauty of holineſs would not be a more becoming grace, than any of thoſe inculcated by a graceleſs lordling.

The two famous univerſities of this land are over-run with the infection. It is attended with a BIBLIOPHOBIA, which not only prevents the diſeaſed perſons from attending to the porter-like language of Homer's gods, but compels them to convert their libraries into dreſſing-rooms, to be conſulting the looking glaſs when they ſhould be conſulting the lexicon, and learning the art of pleaſing, when they ſhould be reading the art of logic with their tutors. I have given a hint to all the patients

tients who have come from thoſe places to conſult me, to conſider that the Graces ſeldom chuſe to remain after the Muſes are diſcarded.

A certain honeſt tradeſman, who had followed the vocation of a tallow-chandler from the age of fourteen to forty, being on a ſudden enriched by a large legacy from a diſtant relation, who had not vouchſafed to know him while alive, was immediately ſeized with a moſt violent Charitomania. His body no longer emitted the odoriferous effluvia of tallow, but ſent forth ſmells of perfume, which had never happened to him before in his life. The covering of his head, which was before a creditable periwig with a double row of curls behind, ſuddenly dropt off, and was ſucceeded by a boyiſh head of hair, with a tail thicker and longer than the thickeſt and longeſt of his candles. He was ſoon over-run with a tribe of vermin called dancing maſters, French maſters, muſic maſters, and perruquiers. His diſorder was attended with a loſs of memory, and he entirely forgot all his acquaintance who

who uſed to meet at the porter club once a week. Inſtead of theſe, whom he no longer knew, he ſought the company of wits and beaux in the faſhionable coffee-houſes at the weſt end of the town. But what is remarkable in his caſe is, that though the ſymptoms were ſo violent, yet inſtead of being received with condolence and ſympathy, he was every where treated with contempt and laughter. After frequent preſcriptions, which failed on account of the inveteracy of the diſeaſe, I gave him up as incurable.

Were I to enumerate all the caſes of this diſorder, which have fallen under my notice, I verily believe my work would conſiſt of many volumes. I ſhall therefore reſt ſatisfied with having given ſuch a ſhort hiſtory of this terrible peſtilence, as may tend in ſome meaſure to elucidate its cauſe, nature, and effects; and I ſhall, with a public ſpirit unknown to my brother quacks, communicate the following invaluable noſtrum, which, taken in time, is a ſovereign remedy. Let the patient adminiſter to himſelf a ſmall doſe conſiſting

ing of a few grains of common ſenſe, and of modeſty one ſcruple, and this will not fail to purge away all tumours ariſing from vanity; or, if the patient has not courage enough to be his own phyſician, let his friends apply a bliſter to the morbid part, made up of cauſtic ridicule.

ESSAY III.

ON THE COMPLAINTS OF MEN OF LEARNING.

SOME have aſſerted, that happineſs, however various in kind, is alike in degree through all the human ſpecies. In conſequence of this opinion, the complaints of the ſtudent are thought to be no better founded than thoſe of the mechanic. Mankind are indeed, it is allowed, more frequently reminded of the evils of the poet and the man of ſcience, than of the misfortunes of the merchant and the manufacturer. It is not, however, ſuppoſed to be the ſuperior number or weight of the calamities attending the former which brings them to the ears of the public, but the practice of committing their thoughts and actions to writing. The tradeſman has a fever, or loſes a part of his family, or his fortune; he ſheds a tear in ſecret, and the world ſees not

not his affliction: while a Quintilian, as if the events were uncommon, tranſmits the loſs of a wife and child to eternity. A malefactor is baniſhed to ſome diſtant ſhore, and no more is heard of him; but an Ovid, exiled for a criminal amour, endeavours to excite the tear of pity in the moſt diſtant ages.

Notwithſtanding the plauſibility of theſe remarks, an impartial obſerver will be obliged to confeſs, that if the evils of men of letters be not greater than thoſe of others, yet the ſenſe of them is commonly more acute. The ſame delicacy of feeling which renders them particularly ſuſceptible of intellectual beauty, makes them feel more ſenſibly the common diſtreſſes of human life.

Men of letters are, for the moſt part, in a ſtate of intenſe thought: while they, who are engaged in leſs refined purſuits, are frequently (however ſome may doubt the total inactivity of the mind), in a ſtate of mental inſenſibility; and if happineſs is only in the mind, every little accident muſt diſturb his repoſe who is always in meditation.

The

The pleaſures of men of literature, are thoſe which ariſe from the contemplation of greatneſs, novelty and beauty; pleaſures of the pureſt and moſt exalted nature. Perhaps, no ſtate is more truly happy than that of a man of genius, at the time he is cloſely engaged in ſurveying either of theſe three ſources of imaginative enjoyment; but the very purity and excellence of theſe pleaſures, are ultimately the occaſion of miſery to their votaries. Our preſent condition will not permit mere mental gratifications to engroſs our whole care and attention; and when the mind reverts from its ideal bliſs to the occupations which its union with a body neceſſarily enjoins, the tranſition from ſupreme delight to inſipidity and vexation, becomes the occaſion of a degree of miſery more than propertionate to the degree of loſt happineſs.

Perfection is ever the object of genius; but perfection is not to be found in human affairs. Genius is, therefore, diſguſted with the impoſſibility of obtaining that which is conſtantly in its view.

This it ſuffers in the receſſes of ſtudy: but upon entrance into the tranſactions and employments of buſy life, the perfection which it aims at, is much more rarely viſible. Objects, which to the common mind are pleaſing or indifferent, appear to the mind of genius deformed and diſguſting; becauſe they fall ſhort of that image of perfection, formed in the fancy, to which, as a ſtandard, every thing is uſually referred and compared. Thus acuteneſs of diſcernment ſerves to diſcover concealed blemiſhes, as the microſcope ſees a ſpot where the naked eye beheld nothing but beauty.

The man of ſtudy is generally engaged in ſerious employments. He lives (σπουδαιως, as the Greeks call it) conſtantly attentive to ſome end. The reſt of the world devote the greateſt ſhare of their time to eaſe, merriment, and diverſion. The man of ſtudy is ſometimes drawn from his cloſet, in compliance with cuſtom, or ſolicited by importunity, to partake of the ordinary amuſements of common life. He goes with reluctance and

and timidity, for perhaps he cannot ſhine in company, and he looks upon every avocation as an obſtacle to the accompliſhment of his chief end and wiſhes. He returns with chagrin, becauſe in the hour of convivial gaiety or of feſtal levity, he has found his merits paſs unnoticed, and his authority treated with neglect.

The ſeveral cauſes which have been thus far aſſigned for the querulous diſpoſition of literary men, cannot reflect on them any diſgrace: but there are others equally probable, and more diſhonourable.

They who are conſtantly endeavouring to add to their attainments, mean at the ſame time to increaſe their value and acquire reputation. Every ſtep of progreſſive advancement fills the breaſt of the proficient with a higher opinion of his own merit, and confirms his conſciouſneſs of ſelf-dignity. But the world is not privy to every new acquiſition which the ſtudent makes in his cloſet. He therefore increaſes his exactions of reſpect, before his companions are ſenſible

of an increaſe of merit. To claim reſpect, and not to have the claim allowed, is peculiarly mortifying to a votary of literary fame. From pride, therefore, the cultivator of knowledge derives no ſmall part of his uneaſineſs.

Every end that is worth purſuit, has a great number of purſuers. Competitors naturally look upon each other as enemies, mutually oppoſing their ſeveral wiſhes. This jealouſy is no where to be found more frequent, or more violent, than among the purſuers of literary honours. The ſtudent is therefore envious, and, than Envy, as the ſatiriſt remarks, no Sicilian tyrant ever invented a greater torture.

Perhaps after all, that lowneſs of ſpirits which a ſedentary life, and an unremitted attention produce, may give riſe to complaints founded only in an hypocondriac imagination.

Whether or not theſe are the true cauſes of the complaints and wretchedneſs of the learned, it is not very material to determine. Certain it is, that they who are furniſhed with the means of the greateſt happineſs,

happineſs, are frequently the moſt miſerable. And one inference of extenſive utility may be drawn from theſe reflections: They to whom the fire of genius and the fruits of learning are denied, may congratulate themſelves that if they want the advantages of genius and learning, they are alſo free from their inconveniencies, and that their inconveniencies ſometimes exceed their advantages.

ESSAY IV.

ON ELOQUENCE.

ELOQUENCE is numbered among thoſe arts which, inſtead of making a progreſſive improvement in the courſe of revolving ages, have receded greatly from their original excellence.

The funeral orations and panegyrics of a few Frenchmen, are the only pieces among the moderns which make pretenſions to rhetorical compoſition. Theſe, however, appear very elaborate and unnatural; whether from the barrenneſs of the ſubjects, or from the weakneſs of the orators, is foreign to our purpoſe. From whatever cauſe it proceeds, it appears, that eloquence is not reſtored by thoſe efforts which are allowed to have been moſt ſucceſsful.

In England, ſo generally is a taſte for ſolid argument and ſubtile reaſoning diffuſed, that mere flights of imagination,

when unſupported by truth and argument, are little attended to. Thus it has been ſaid, we have no truly claſſical hiſtory of our own country. Elaborate collections of facts, proceedings of parliament, and accurate deſcriptions of our navies and armaments fill up, with a jejune detail, ſome of our moſt celebrated hiſtories. A great deal of ſagacity has, indeed, been exerted in the adjuſtment of conteſted æras, unwearied labour in illuſtrating obſcure paſſages in our annals, and much patience in the examination of records. But where after all is the painting of a Livy, and the conciſe elegance of a Salluſt?

It is not therefore ſurpriſing, that a people who admit not unneceſſary embelliſhments in matters of taſte, and who can fall in love with naked truth even when ſhe is at liberty to dreſs herſelf in the garb of fancy, ſhould reject mere ornamental flouriſhes in the important tranſactions of political debate, and the ſerious proceedings of a court of judicature.

Thus eloquence, perhaps, is not to be found either in the ſenate or the forum of Britain. There is, indeed, a very great degree of merit in many of the harangues ſpoken in thoſe places, but they come not up to the idea of Grecian or Roman eloquence. The defect however is not owing to a want of ability, but to a voluntary compliance with the taſte and genius of the nation.

In the pulpit, indeed, we may find ſome veſtiges of ancient oratory; but waving at preſent the enquiry whether we reſemble the ancients in this point, I ſhall proceed to tranſcribe a few obſervations on pulpit eloquence in general, which I collected not long ago by accident.

One evening laſt autumn, as I was walking in the fields to catch a mouthful of freſh air, I obſerved a man, ſomewhat advanced in years and of a compoſed aſpect, ſauntering in the ſame path with myſelf, ſeemingly in profound meditation. For a conſiderable time neither of

us

us choſe to commence a converſation; till at length, when a tacit familiarity between us had removed the reſerve of ſtrangeneſs, the old man opened with an uſual introductory topic, the ſerenity of the evening. For my own part, I never refuſe to join in one of the moſt reaſonable, as well as moſt agreeable pleaſures of human life. By degrees, the ſeverity of my companion's countenance brightened up as the converſation grew warm, and he told me he had juſt been hearing an excellent ſermon at an evening lecture, and, as was his uſual way, had taken this little turn in the fields to meditate on ſerious ſubjects without interruption. I muſt own I was rather ſtartled at hearing this, apprehending I had fallen into the company of ſome methodiſtical enthuſiaſt, who would endeavour to make a proſelyte; but upon farther converſation, I found myſelf agreeably miſtaken. The old man made ſome reflections, which, as they ſtruck me at the time, I entered among my minutes as ſoon as I returned home.

"You

"You must know, Sir," said he, "that I am an old-fashioned man. I go "to church on Wednesdays and Fridays, "according to my good old grandmo- "ther's directions, who (well I remem- "ber it) used always to appoint me the "bearer of her large print prayer-book "bound in purple morocco. To these "early impressions, perhaps, I owe all "my oddities; and you will easily ima- "gine what a queer fellow I am, when "I inform you, that I put my family to "the inconvenience of dining, on Sun- "days, a full hour sooner than common, "for no other reason in the world but "that I may do my duty towards my "Maker, by going to church in the af- "ternoon. While my neighbours are at "the playhouse, or the tavern, I can "make shift to kill time at an evening "lecture; and I often follow a famous "preacher of a charity sermon with all "the ardour with which a favourite "player inspires the frequenters of thea- "trical entertainments. These are my "usual diversions, and really, Sir, they

"have

" have ſome advantages attending them.
" In the firſt place, they are not expen-
" ſive; for what is a ſhilling thrown away
" now and then upon a trifling whim,
" ſince every man has his hobby-horſe;
" ſuch as relieving a ſuffering fellow-crea-
" ture, or contributing to the education
" and ſupport of a poor orphan? Se-
" condly, I can go into any church,
" within the Bills of Mortality, without
" danger of being puſhed, and ſqueezed,
" and trod upon, and ſtifled to death,
" as ſometimes happens to thoſe who
" follow more faſhionable diverſions;
" nay, and I can ſit the whole time with-
" out ſweating in the leaſt.

" Now, Sir, as I have conſtantly at-
" tended to various ſorts of pulpit elo-
" quence, I ſuppoſe I may pretend, with-
" out vanity, to be ſome judge of it.
" Do not, however, expect that I ſhall
" bring proofs of the juſtneſs of my re-
" marks from your Ariſtotles, your Tul-
" lies, or your Quintilians; for I am a
" plain common man, and if I have any

" ſenſe,

" ſenſe, God knows it is only plain com-
" mon ſenſe.

" Let me premiſe that I ſhall now and
" then make uſe of the uſual terms of
" diviſion and ſubdiviſion. Such, for
" inſtance, as thoſe edifying little words,
" Firſt, ſecondly, thirdly, to conclude,
" to come to my next head, and the
" like. Conſider, Sir, I have been long
" uſed to this ſtyle, and naturally run
" into it.

" Of preachers, I ſhall reckon four
" kinds; the Fine Man, the Pretty
" Preacher, the Good Textman, and
" the Humdrum.

" Firſt then of the firſt (forgive my
" ſermonical ſtyle), namely, of the FINE
" MAN:

" A ſtentorophonic voice is the funda-
" mental excellence of your Fine Man,
" and a powerful excellence it is. I have
" been a witneſs of its force. No ſooner
" has the Fine Man uttered the pathetic
" and ſignificant phraſe, 'to conclude,'
" than I have heard the whole row of ma-
" trons, in the middle aiſle, with one

" accord

" accord cry, ' humph,' and immediately
" ſecond their exclamation with a torrent
" of tears, which flowed down their wi-
" thered cheeks, interrupted only by ſighs
" and ſobs. The next qualification is
" flexibility of limbs. From this excel-
" lence ariſe theſe violent contortions of
" the body, that wringing of the hands,
" beating of the breaſt, rolling of the
" eyes, foaming of the mouth, and one
" or two more ſymptoms of madneſs,
" which never fail to gain the applauſe
" of the weeping congregation. The
" next—but what am I about, Sir? In
" truth I cannot recollect the other excel-
" lencies; as for ſenſe, learning, argu-
" ment, theſe are not to be expected in
" your Fine Man: but then the want of
" theſe is abundantly ſupplied by noiſe,
" nonſenſe, and grimace.

" To come to my ſecond head. Se-
" condly then, as was before laid down,
" we treat of the PRETTY PREACHER:

" The Pretty Preacher is an imitator
" of the Fine Man. As a copy, he is
" ſomewhat fainter than the original. He

" whines,

" whines, he ſobs, he roars, but roars like
" any nightingale, as Shakeſpeare has it.
" A ſoft effeminate voice, a pretty face
" (for look ye, Sir, a pretty face is a
" more powerful perſuaſive, than the ar-
" guments of a Chillingworth), and a
" white handkerchief, are the conſtituent
" parts of a Pretty Preacher.

" Theſe two ſorts of Preachers are
" complete maſters of the paſſions, with-
" out addreſſing the underſtanding in the
" leaſt. In truth, I cannot help com-
" paring them to a fiddler of old time, I
" remember to have heard of at ſchool,
" who made ſtocks and ſtones dance mi-
" nuets, and rivers run the wrong way,
" and played a hundred ſuch pranks mere-
" ly by the ſound of the fiddle-ſtrings.
" Juſt in the ſame manner a Fine Man,
" and a Pretty Preacher, can force the
" tear from the eye, and the ſhilling from
" the inmoſt receſſes of the pocket, by
" dint of ſound, which, in this caſe, is
" never the echo of ſenſe.

" To come to my third head. Thirdly
" then, the GOOD TEXTMAN lays down
" good

" good plain rules of morality, and con-
" firms every precept by a quotation
" from holy writ. The graces of elocu-
" tion he never aims at. Rhetorical
" flouriſhes, new remarks, or beautiful
" language, are not to be required of
" him. In ſhort, the intelligent part of
" the congregation will ſeldom find their
" underſtandings enlightened, or their
" fancy amuſed by him; but the plain
" ſober-minded Chriſtian, provided he
" can diſtinguiſh what the preacher ſays,
" may carry away ſomething for his edi-
" fication.

" To conclude with my fourth and
" laſt head. The HUMDRUM ſeems to
" conſider preaching and praying as a
" kind of trade or work, which if he
" performs ſo as to get his wages, he is
" ſatisfied. He reads the liturgy as he
" would read a news-paper. He endea-
" vours neither to pleaſe, to ſtrike, nor
" to convince, but thinks the duty ſuf-
" ficiently well done, if it is but done
" according to the rubrick and at the
" eſtabliſhed ſeaſons. To give him his
" due, he commonly preaches the beſt

" divinity

" divinity in the language; for as he is
" too lazy to compoſe, he has nothing to
" do but to make choice of the moſt cele-
" brated compoſitions of others. He,
" however, murders every ſentence he
" reads. For the moſt part, he chuſes
" doctrinal rather than practical diſcour-
" ſes; but the misfortune is, that while
" he is making the myſteries as clear as
" the ſun at noon-day, his audience are
" commonly aſleep as faſt as a church.
" In a word, you may form ſome idea of
" this kind of Preacher, by taking a
" view of Hogarth's print of the ſleepy
" congregation, where there is a Hum-
" drum holding forth, ſo as effectually
" to infuſe peace and quietneſs into the
" minds of his hearers."

Here the old man's avocations obliged him to conclude the converſation, with expreſſing a wiſh, " That men of virtue and
" learning, as the clergy generally are,
" would not let the effect of their excellent
" prayers and diſcourſes, which, if well
" delivered, might reform the world, be
" in great meaſure loſt through indiffe-
" rence or affectation."

ESSAY V.

ON MODERN LITERATURE.

TO complain of the preſent, and to praiſe the paſt, has ſo long been the favourite topic of diſappointment, or of ignorance, that every ſtricture on the degeneracy of the times is looked upon as the effuſion of ill-nature, or the reſult of ſuperficial obſervation: but the abſurdity of declamatory invective, ought not to preclude the cool remarks of truth, reaſon, and experience.

The practice of vice, or virtue, has indeed varied at different periods, rather in the mode, than in the degree; but the ſtate of literature has ſuffered more violent revolutions; it has ſometimes ſhone with the brighteſt luſtre, and at others has been totally overſhadowed with the darkneſs of barbariſm.

To review the ſtate of learning from the earlieſt periods, and to inveſtigate the cauſes of its fluctuation, is a taſk that requires much labour, ſagacity, and erudition. More ſuperficial enquiries will, however, ſuffice to examine the juſtice of the charge of literary degeneracy in the preſent age, and, if it be well founded, to diſcover the cauſes of it.

It has been obſerved by an ingenious writer, that as every age has been marked by ſome peculiarity, from which it has derived its characteriſtic appellation; ſo the preſent, were it to be diſtinguiſhed by a name taken from its moſt prevalent humour, might be called, The AGE OF AUTHORS. Of late years, almoſt every man has felt an ambition of appearing in print, from the voluminous lexicographer, down to the ſcribbler in a pamphlet or a news-paper. It is indeed natural to ſuppoſe, that of a great number of competitors, ſome would reach the prize; and that the univerſal combination of intellects would effect ſome ſtupendous work, which ſhould exceed all the productions

ductions of our predeceſſors, and demand the admiration of the lateſt poſterity. It has however been obſerved, that the learning of the preſent age is not deep though diffuſive, and that its productions are not excellent though numerous.

The multiplicity of compoſitions is an argument of their haſty production; and haſtineſs is, at leaſt, a preſumptive proof of their want of merit. In this point, the literary and natural world reſemble each other. The productions of nature, whether vegetable or animal, as they are either of a ſlow or ſpeedy growth, are known to be durable or tranſitory, ſolid or unſubſtantial. The oak and the elephant are long before they attain to perfection, but are ſtill longer before they decay; while the butterfly and the floweret periſh as they ariſe, almoſt within a diurnal revolution of the ſun. The works of Virgil coſt him much time and labour; but they have exiſted near two thouſand years univerſally admired, while the compoſitions of that poet, who boaſted he could write two or three hundred ver-

ſes while he ſtood † on one leg, were loſt in a ſpace almoſt as ſhort as that in which they were produced.

But the haſty formation of literary works in modern times, is not a greater obſtacle to their excellence, than the mercenary motives of their authors. The office of inſtructing mankind in morality, and of informing them in ſcience, was once reſerved for thoſe alone who were particularly adapted to the taſk by the impulſes of genius, by peculiar opportunities, and by ſingular application. In theſe times, however, the profeſſion of an author is become a lucrative employment, and is practiſed rather by thoſe who feel the inconvenience of hunger, than by thoſe who are ſtimulated with the hope of immortality. But it is a known truth, that avarice contracts the mind, and renders it incapable of elevated ſentiments and generous enterprizes. It ceaſes therefore to be matter of wonder, that works are deſtitute of ſpirit, when they proceed not from the noble ardour

† Vide Horat.

inſpired by the love of fame, but from the frigid incitements of the love of money.

The depraved taſte of readers is another cauſe of the degeneracy of writers. They who write for the public, muſt gratify the taſte of the public. In vain are their compoſitions formed on the model of the beſt writers, and regulated by the precepts of the moſt judicious critics, if they conform not to the popular caprice and the miſtaken judgment of the vulgar. In an age when the taſte for reading is univerſal, many works, contemptible both in deſign and execution, will be received, by ſome readers, with diſtinguiſhed applauſe. The want of the merits of juſt reaſoning and pure language, is with the greater part, the half-learned and the ignorant, no objection. In truth, unconnected thoughts, and ſuperficial declamation, are congenial to minds unaccuſtomed to accurate thinking, and inſenſible of the charms of finiſhed excellence. Hence writers, of acknowledged abilities and learning, have been known, when they aimed at popularity, to relinquiſh real

excellence, and adopt a falſe taſte, in oppoſition to their own judgment.

After all, it may not perhaps be abſurd, to attribute the complaints againſt the preſent ſet of authors, to ignorance, envy, and caprice. In every department of literature, in the gay regions of fancy, and in the depths of philoſophy and ſcience, many authors are there of this age and nation, who have acquired an illuſtrious reputation by deſerving it: and if they want that originality of thought and ſolidity of learning, which mark the productions of our firſt writers, yet have they a force, elegance, and correctneſs of ſtyle, unknown to their predeceſſors.

ESSAY VI.

ON TEMPERANCE.

THE advantages which ariſe, from regulating the ſeveral appetites, to the health of the body, have been too repeatedly inſiſted upon to require any farther animadverſion. The preſent remarks ſhall be confined to temperance of diet in particular, and to the advantages which accrue from it to the health of the mind.

How far the intellectual faculties are connected with the animal œconomy, is a diſquiſition better adapted to the natural philoſopher than to the moraliſt. The experience of every individual muſt convince him of their alliance ſo far as that the mind and body ſympathize in all the modifications of pleaſure or of pain.

One would imagine, that the ſtoical apathy was founded on a notion of the

independence of the mind on the body. According to theſe philoſophers, the mind may remain, as it were, an unconcerned ſpectator, while the body undergoes the the moſt excruciating torments: but the moderns, however diſpoſed to be ſtoics, cannot help being a little afflicted by a fit of the gout or ſtone.

If the mind ſuffers with the body in the violence of pain, and acuteneſs of diſeaſe, it is uſually found to recover its wonted ſtrength when the body is reſtored to health and vigour.

But one kind of ſympathy there is, in which the mind continues to ſuffer even after the body is relieved. When the liſtleſs languor, and the nauſeous ſatiety of recent exceſs is gradually worn off, the mind ſtill continues to feel a burden, which no efforts can remove; and to be ſurrounded with a cloud, which time only can diſſipate.

Didactic authors, who have undertaken to preſcribe rules for the ſtudent in his purſuit of knowledge, frequently inſiſt on a regularity and abſtinence in the arti-

cles

cles of food and wine. They eſteem it a fruitleſs labour to aim at increaſing the ſtock of ideas, and improving the powers of penetration, without a ſtrict obſervance of the laws of Temperance.

It has been remarked, that the founders of colleges, who ſpared no expence in the embelliſhment of the buildings, have not been ſo liberal in providing food for the inhabitants. Perhaps thoſe no leſs judicious than pious patrons of learning were ſenſible of the utility of frequent faſting and temperate meals, in promoting literary, as well as moral and religious improvement. Nature's wants they took care to ſatisfy, and Nature wants but little.

Horace *, in a ſatire in which he profeſſedly enumerates the advantages of Temperance, obſerves, with a beautiful energy of expreſſion, "that the body "overcharged with the exceſs of yeſter-"day, weighs down the mind together

*——Quin corpus onuſtum
Heſternis vitiis animum quoque prægravat una,
Atque affigit humi divinæ particulam auræ.

"with

" with itſelf, and fixes to the earth that " particle of the divine ſpirit."

That Aurora is a friend to the Muſes, is almoſt proverbial, and like all thoſe aphoriſms which are founded on experience, is a juſt remark: but if an adequate cauſe were to be aſſigned for this effect, I know not whether it might not juſtly be attributed to faſting, as much as to the refreſhment of ſleep. The emptineſs of the ſtomach it is which tends to give to the underſtanding acuteneſs, to the imagination vigour, and to the memory retention †.

It is well known, that the principal meal of the ancients was the ſupper; and it has been matter of ſurprife that they, whoſe wiſdom was ſo generally conſpicuous in the ſeveral inſtitutions of common life, ſhould adopt a practice which is now univerſally eſteemed injurious to health. It is however not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that they were unwilling to clog their intellects by ſatisfying the cravings of

† In more ſenſes than one may be ſaid: " Ingenii largitor venter."

hunger

hunger in the day-time, the ſeaſon of buſineſs and deliberation, and choſe rather to indulge themſelves in the hour of natural feſtivity, when no care remained, but to retire from the banquet to the pillow.

It ſhould ſeem, that the evils which accrue to the ſenſible faculties from immoderate eating, are not confined to the rational creation. It is obſerved by thoſe who purſue the ſports in which it is neceſſary to uſe the aſſiſtance of dogs, that, in order to improve the ſagacity of thoſe animals, it is proper to keep them in a ſtate of conſtant hunger.

There are humouriſts, who pretend to meaſure the extent of a man's underſtanding by the ſlenderneſs of his belly, and from a protuberance of the abdomen, generally preſume a correſponding thickneſs of the ſcull. I cannot however entirely coincide with them, becauſe leanneſs and corpulency are not always occaſioned by abſtinence or gluttony; but where either of theſe habits of body ariſe from either of theſe cauſes, I muſt allow, that the opinion is ſometimes founded on truth, and ſupported by experience.

ESSAY VII.

ON CONCISENESS OF STYLE.

A Celebrated French writer, remarkable for CONCISENESS OF STYLE, in a letter to a friend which he had made longer than uſual, apologizes for its prolixity, by ſaying, that he had not time to write a ſhorter.

To ſay much in few words is certainly a great excellence, and at the ſame time a great difficulty in compoſition. The mind naturally dwells on a ſtrong conception, views it on every ſide, and expreſſes its variety of lights in as great a variety of words; but the amplification of a ſentence, though it may add to its perſpicuity, frequently diminiſhes its force; as the ſcattered ſun-beams diffuſe only a gentle heat, but are able to burn when collected in the focus.

Brevity

Brevity of expreſſion is ſometimes the mark of conſcious dignity and virtue. It was manlineſs of ſentiment, and haughtineſs of ſoul, which gave riſe to the laconic ſtile. When the tyrant of Macedon menaced the Lacedemonians, the anſwer they returned was compriſed in theſe few words: "Dionyſius is at Corinth." To underſtand which, it is neceſſary to call to mind, that Dionyſius tyrant of Sicily had been dethroned by his people, and compelled to earn his bread by ſetting up a little ſchool at Corinth. Such a document, expreſſed in ſo brief a manner, muſt have ſtruck the mind with more force than the laboured periods of an Iſocrates, or the diffuſion of a Cicero.

It is well known, that Salluſt was an enemy to the great orator of Rome. One would almoſt imagine, from the difference of their ſtile, that the diſagreement extended to matters of taſte and literature. Salluſt always labours to expreſs his ideas in the feweſt words. Cicero delights in amplification. It has been ſaid, however, that a man of true taſte would rather have

have written that beautiful parallel between Cato and Cæsar, than all the Philippics.

Many critics have employed their talents in making comparisons between Demosthenes and Tully. All of them agree in attributing to the former conciseness, and to the latter diffusion: and according to this judgment, they have not hesitated to give the preference to the Athenian. The concise vehemence of Demosthenes carried all before it by violence; the prolixity of Cicero gained ground by the soft arts of insinuation. The effect of the former was sudden and irresistible, that of the latter, weak and dilatory.

In the *denouement* of a modern tragedy, we find the heroes and heroines expressing their grief in pompous declamation. But notwithstanding the actor mouths out his plaints in all the grandeur of lengthened periods, and with all the vehemence of studied action, the audience frequently sit unmoved, and are more disposed to smile than to weep. In the Œdipus Tyrannus of

of Sophocles, Jocaſta, when ſhe diſcovers her own and her huſband's ſituation, as deplorable as can well be conceived, immediately retires from the ſtage, repeating only theſe words—"Alas! alas! wretched "man that thou art—this only can I ſay to "thee—henceforth, for ever ſilent*." Corneille would have put, at leaſt, fifty lines into her mouth, without half the effect.

Cæſar, who handled the pen with as much ſkill as the ſword, has gained more general applauſe from one ſentence in the laconic ſtile, than from all his Commentaries. Could the length of a poliſhed period, and the tedioufneſs of exact narration, more clearly, more forcibly, and more agreeably have expreſſed the rapidity of a conqueſt, than the ſhort ſentence—"I "came, I ſaw, I conquered?" In the original it is ſtill more emphatical, becauſe the idiom of the Latin language allows the omiſſion of the pronoun before the verbs.

* Ιού, ιού, δύστηνε· τοῦτο γὰρ σ' ἔχω
Μόνον προσειπεῖν, ἄλλο δ' οὔποθ' ὕστερον.
Οιδ. Τυρ. Act IV. Scene iii.

Military

Military harangues derive their chief beauty from an expreſſive brevity. Livy abounds with ſhort ſpeeches, conſiſting of hardly more than half a dozen words, in which Generals animated their ſoldiers to ruſh on to danger and death. But antient hiſtory affords no inſtance ſo ſtriking as that of a French king, who thus addreſſed his men immediately before an attack—" I am your General—you are " Frenchmen—there are the enemy."

Conciſeneſs of narration, whether in writing or in ſpeaking, is a mark of truth. To introduce a multitude of proofs and aſſeverations, is tacitly to confeſs, that the aſſertion ſtands in great need of corroboration. One of our Engliſh ſects, which profeſſes a ſingular love of truth and plain-dealing, has almoſt made it a tenet of their religion to uſe no other words in denying, or aſſerting, than the ſimple particles of negation and affirmation: and a poet of antiquity remarks, that many promiſes and profeſſions, inſtead of ſtrengthening, weaken our belief. A plain country gentleman in my hearing,

ing, the other day, told a man, who had been relating ſome extraordinary ſtory, that he ſhould readily have believed him, had he not taken ſo much pains to perſuade him it was true.

They who have travelled, know that the French, in the profuſion of their politeneſs, make many offers on purpoſe to be refuſed. The Pariſian tells you, "he "is your ſervant, your ſlave, he will die "for your ſake;" but ſhould you really ſtand in need of his aſſiſtance, it is a doubt whether he will give himſelf the leaſt trouble to alleviate your diſtreſs, or diſentangle your embarraſſment: but an Engliſhman will ſecretly do you a piece of ſervice, and be diſtreſſed with the expreſſions of your gratitude. The former will overwhelm you with profeſſions of friendſhip, without the leaſt real regard; the latter will be ſurly, and at the ſame time go all lengths in ſoothing your ſorrows and relieving your wants.

Bluntneſs is ſaid to be one of the characteriſtics of the Engliſh, and is allowed to be a natural conſequence of their ſincerity.

cerity. Should a plain honeſt farmer hear a modern Fine Gentleman paying his compliments, and be told, that all his fine ſpeeches were inſtances of politeneſs; he would probably conclude, that politeneſs was a refined word, ſubſtituted in the place of a very groſs appellation.

But theſe effects of brevity and conciſeneſs, are not to be found only in writing and converſation. There is ſomething analogous to them in the arts of painting and ſculpture. There is a concealment and ſhading, which ſets off more beautifully, and diſplays more clearly, than an open, an undiſguiſed, a glaring repreſentation. Timanthes took for the ſubject of a picture, the ſacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis. He gave a degree of grief to the ſpectators, proportionate to the nearneſs, or diſtance of their relation, to the lovely victim. Thus he had exhauſted the paſſion before he came to the father, and, at a loſs to expreſs a ſufficient anguiſh, he repreſented the diſconſolate parent concealing his face in the folds of his garments.

Were

Were the cauſe of the good effects of Conciſeneſs to be inveſtigated, it might perhaps be found no other than the pleaſure which a reader, or ſpectator, takes in having ſomething left for his own ſagacity to diſcover. The mind greedily ſnatches at a hint, and delights to enlarge upon it; but frigid is the employment of attending to thoſe productions, the authors of which have laboured every thing into ſuch perſpicuity, that the obſerver has nothing to do but barely to look on. Things may be too obvious to excite attention. The ſun, the moon, and the ſtars, roll over our heads every day without attracting our notice; but we ſurvey with eager curioſity, a comet, an eclipſe, or any other extraordinary phænomenon in nature.

ESSAY VIII.

ON PATIENCE.

THAT miſery is more general than happineſs has been long perceived even by thoſe who have taken only a ſuperficial view of human life. But although the evils which openly appear, which lour on the brow, and melt in the eye, are numerous; yet is the melancholy catalogue, which none but the ſufferer reads, written in his own heart, infinitely more crouded with wretchedneſs and woe.

And, indeed, as miſery is more frequent than happineſs, ſo is its nature leſs mixed and modified. Few can call to mind their moſt exalted ſatisfactions, without bringing to remembrance ſome alloy. In a ſtate of happineſs, fear is continually repreſenting the poſſibility of a change. In a ſtate of miſery, it is true, that hope ſometimes opens a chearful ſcene, and ſooths

ſooths the mind to acquieſcence under its pain; but every man's experience will convince him, that hope is commonly leſs predominant than fear; and that the confeſſedly wretched are ſeldomer tempted to diſplay the ſmile of joy, than thoſe who are acknowledged to be happy, are forced to heave the ſigh of ſorrow.

But however common, and however intenſe the evils of human life may be, certain it is, that evils equally great, do not affect all men with an equal degree of anguiſh; and the different manner of ſuſtaining evils, ariſes from one of theſe two cauſes, a natural inſenſibility, or an adventitious fortitude, acquired by the exertion of the virtue of PATIENCE.

Apathus, when a ſchool-boy, was not remarkable for quickneſs of apprehenſion, or brilliancy of wit; but though his progreſs was ſlow, it was ſure, and the additional opportunities of ſtudy, which he enjoyed by being free from thoſe avocations which vivacity and warmth of conſtitution occaſion, made him a tolerably good ſcholar. The ſullenneſs of his de-

portment, however, alienated the affections of his teachers; and upon the ſlighteſt miſdemeanours, he often underwent the puniſhment of the rod, which he always bore without a tear and without complaint.

He had not long been at ſchool, before his father and mother died of a contagious fever. Preparatory to the diſcloſure of ſo mournful an event to an orphan ſon, many precautions were taken, many phraſes of condolence ſtudied. At length, the maſter took him aſide, and after ſeveral obſervations on the inſtability of human affairs, the ſuddenneſs of death, the neceſſity of ſubmiſſion to Providence, and the inefficacy of ſorrow, told him, that his parents were no more. To this, young Apathus replied, by obſerving, without any viſible alteration in his countenance, that he ſuſpected ſomething of that kind had happened, as he had not received his letters at the uſual time; but that he had not ſaid any thing on the ſubject, as he thought his being poſſeſſed of a fine fortune by the event, was a matter that concerned

cerned nobody but himſelf: "For (ſays "he) as the death was ſudden, there pro- "bably was no will, and my father being "pretty warm, as they call it, and I be- "ing an only ſon, I think I ſhall be very "well off." Here he was interrupted by his maſter, who was now deſirous of ſome degree of that grief which he had before been ſolicitous to prevent.—"And are you "not affected (ſaid he) with the loſs of "the deareſt friends you had in the "world?" "Why, Sir, (replied the in- "ſenſible) you have juſt now been teach- "ing me to ſubmit to Providence, and tell- "ing me, we muſt all die, and the like; "and do I not practiſe your precepts?" The maſter was too much aſtoniſhed to be able to anſwer, and haſtily left the young man; who probably concluded the day with a feaſt of gingerbread, or a game at marbles.

Soon after he left ſchool, he took it into his head to enter into the ſtate of matrimony. But here let the gentle reader be informed, that he was not induced to ſubmit his neck to the yoke by any of

thoſe fine feelings which conſtitute love. The object of his choice had ten thouſand pounds; and he conſidered that ten thouſand pounds would pay for the lady's board. He had reaſon to ſuſpect her conjugal fidelity; but, as he felt no uneaſineſs on the ſubject, he was reſolved not to diſturb domeſtic peace. His table was ſoon ſurrounded with a ſet of roſy boys and girls, and Apathus did not concern himſelf with conſidering, whether they were his own, but ſatisfied himſelf, as he uſed to boaſt, with doing his duty, in filling their bellies and clothing their backs. When the little prattlers were arrived at that age when none can behold them without pleaſure, they were ſeized with an unfavourable ſmall-pox, and ſeverally carried from the cradle to the grave. The conſtant attendance of the mother, on this occaſion, brought on a fever, which, together with a weakneſs occaſioned by an advanced ſtate of pregnancy, proved fatal. Then, at laſt, Apathus was obſerved to fetch a ſigh, and lift up his hands to heaven—at the ſight of the undertaker's bill,

bill. A thouſand misfortunes in buſineſs have fallen to his lot, all which he has borne with ſeeming fortitude. He is now, at length, reduced to that ſtate, in which gentlemen chooſe to take lodgings within the purlieus of St. George's fields: but there is no alteration in his features; he ſtill ſings his ſong, takes his glaſs, and laughs at thoſe ſilly mortals who weary themſelves in wandering up and down the world without controul.

Thus Apathus affords a ſtriking inſtance of that power of bearing afflictions which ariſes from natural inſenſibility. Stoicus will give us a right idea of Patience as a virtue.

From that period at which the mind begins to think, Stoicus was remarkable for a quality, which, in children, is called ſhamefacedneſs. He could never enter a room full of company without ſhewing his diſtreſs, by a violent ſuffuſion of bluſhes. At ſchool, he avoided the commiſſion of faults, rather through fear of ſhame than of puniſhment. In ſhort, an exquiſite ſenſibility, at the ſame time that

it

it gave him the moſt exalted delight, frequently expoſed him to the keeneſt affliction. Thus from being acquainted with grief, though a ſtranger to misfortune, he acquired a habit of bearing evils before any heavy ones befell him.

Stoicus was deſigned for a literary life, which, to the generality of mankind, appears almoſt exempt from the common attacks of ill-fortune: but if there were not other inſtances of the peculiar miſeries of the ſtudent, Stoicus alone might evince the groundleſſneſs of ſuch an opinion. From a ſanguine temper, he was prone to anticipate ſucceſs; and from an enterprizing diſpoſition, was little inclined to ſit down contented without a conſiderable ſhare of reputation. Influenced by his love of fame, he ventured to appeal to the public taſte, and actually ſent into the world a performance of great merit: but as the work wanted ſome popular attractions, it was ſoon neglected and ſunk into oblivion.

An evil of this kind, perhaps, the merchant or the manufacturer may treat with

with contempt. They, however, who, with the ſame feelings, have been in the ſame predicament, will know the anguiſh which ſecretly tormented the diſconſolate Stoicus. This diſappointment was the firſt affliction of his life, and on this he long meditated without intermiſſion. He has not again ventured to publiſh, and therefore has had no cauſe of uneaſineſs from the ingratitude of the many-headed monſter: but the evils of his private life have been numerous and afflictive beyond conception. The death of an amiable wife, a conſtant ſtate of ſickneſs, expectations continually diſappointed, have concurred to overwhelm him—but all their efforts have been fruitleſs. The reflections of philoſophy and religion fortify him againſt every attack, and I never viſit him without obſerving a placid ſmile of reſignation diffuſed on his countenance. He is ſenſible of the real weight of every evil, and at the ſame time ſuſtains it with alacrity. He draws reſources from himſelf in every emergency, and with the niceſt feelings is become perfectly callous.

This

This is genuine Patience, and though the former may by ſome be thought a happineſs, the latter only can be eſteemed a virtue.

Senſibility, with all its inconveniencies, is to be cheriſhed by thoſe who underſtand and wiſh to maintain the dignity of their nature. To feel for others, diſpoſes us to exerciſe the amiable virtue of charity, which our religion indiſpenſably requires. It conſtitutes that enlarged benevolence which philoſophy inculcates, and which is indeed comprehended in Chriſtian charity. It is the privilege and the ornament of man; and the pain which it cauſes is abundantly recompenſed by that ſweet ſenſation which ever accompanies the exerciſe of beneficence.

To feel our own miſery with full force is not to be deprecated. Affliction ſoftens and improves the heart. Tears, to ſpeak in the ſtyle of figure, fertilize the ſoil in which the virtues grow. And it is the remark of one who underſtood human nature, that the faculties of the mind,

mind, as well as the feelings of the heart, are meliorated by adverſity.

But, in order to promote theſe ends, our ſufferings muſt not be permitted to overwhelm us. We muſt oppoſe them with the arms of reaſon and religion; and to expreſs the idea in the language of the philoſopher, as well as the poet, of Nature, every one, while he is compelled to feel his misfortunes like a man, ſhould reſolve to bear them alſo like a man.

ESSAY IX.

ON RETIREMENT.

TO VARUS.

I Lately paid a viſit to a friend, who, not long ago, withdrew from the hurry of buſineſs to enjoy the ſweets of a rural retirement in the ſouth of Wales. His houſe is ſituated on an eminence, which commands an agreeable proſpect. At the bottom of his garden, which is laid out in a taſte peculiar to himſelf, yet entirely conformable to nature, runs a ſmall river, remarkable for the ſmoothneſs of its ſurface and the clearneſs of its water: but though the houſe is perfectly agreeable in ſituation, ſome have thought that the freſhneſs of the air, the beauty of the ſcenery, and the ſilence of retirement, can by no means compenſate for the want of a neighbourhood: for to ſay the truth, there is not a ſingle houſe to be ſeen within

in a mile of my friend's little ſolitary villa, except one poor cottage, which is inhabited by his gardener.

Though I was at firſt, like the reſt, much diſpoſed to diſapprove the ſolitude of my friend's habitation; yet, when I had reſided with him ſome time, and had enjoyed the calm rational pleaſures of philoſophic eaſe, I became enthuſiaſtically fond of this ſequeſtered life. It muſt, indeed, be confeſſed, that Hilario, for that is his name, poſſeſſes ſome qualities indiſpenſably neceſſary to render ſolitude agreeable. He has a natural ſweetneſs of temper, a refined taſte for literature and muſic, and, at the ſame time, ſome reliſh for the common diverſions of the country. But though he divides the greater part of his time in the alternate amuſements of his books, his harpſichord, his dogs and his horſes, yet is he never ſo happy as in the enjoyment of the converſation of a friend, whoſe manners and ſentiments are congenial with his own.

I muſt not forget to tell you, that he derives much of his pleaſure from a know-

ledge of botany and natural philoſophy, which he acquired in the former part of his life. His acquaintance with theſe ſciences enables him to make great improvements in the cultivation of his garden, where almoſt every plant, which is curious, uſeful, or beautiful, is brought to its higheſt perfection.

You may perhaps ſuppoſe, from his ſequeſtered manner of life, that he is utterly unacquainted with the living world. He takes care however to inform himſelf of the topic of the day, by attending to periodical publications of repute and authenticity; and he is allowed to make moſt pertinent obſervations on the taſte, manners, and politics of the preſent times. His remarks always have this peculiarity, owing perhaps to his diſtance from parties, that they ſavour of that liberal ſpirit which marks the true gentleman and the citizen of the world.

The great evil of ſolitude is, that reaſon becomes weak for want of exerciſe, while the powers of imagination are invigorated by indulgence. The gloomy ideas

ideas of Popiſh ſuperſtition were derived from the cells of the monaſtery. Fanaticiſm and bigotry, melancholy and deſpair, have ever been engendered in the cave and the convent. Happy in a mind furniſhed with ideas of every kind, Hilario is never at a loſs for occaſions to exert the powers of his reaſon; and can, at all times, divert his imagination from the horrors of the ſpleen, by the pleaſing employments of literary purſuits.

The avocations of an active life ſhortened a viſit which I would gladly have protracted. I return to the engagements of the world, ſupported by the ſoothing expectation, that a time will come, when I ſhall be able to ſpend the evening of life in a ſweet retreat, like that of Hilario, where nothing will add to my happineſs, but the preſence of a friend ſo dear to my heart as yourſelf.

ESSAY X.

ON AFFECTATION OF THE VICES OF MEN OF EMINENCE.

Decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile——
HOR.

IT has frequently happened, that men, diſtinguiſhed by their genius, have, from an unſettled habit of life, from an affectation of ſingularity, or from uncommon warmth of conſtitution, neglected the common rules of prudence, and plunged themſelves into all the miſeries of vice and diſſipation. They who are but ſlightly acquainted with the lives of our Engliſh writers, can recollect many inſtances of men of the brighteſt parts, whoſe lives, after an uninterrupted courſe of miſery, have terminated under the preſſure of want in the confinement of a gaol. They have been admired, and at the ſame time neglected; praiſed, and at the ſame time ſtarved.

As

As the conſequences of their imprudence are generally fatal, and generally known, a reaſonable mind would ſcarcely believe, that any ſhould be found ambitious of treading in their footſteps, when they err. Yet, ſuch attraction has the brilliancy of literary reputation, that every witling, who pens a ſtanza, while he ſhould be engroſſing a deed, looking upon himſelf as a genius of uncommon magnitude, thinks it neceſſary, in order to complete his character, to plunge into the exceſſes of drunkenneſs and debauchery. When his follies have thrown him out of his profeſſion, ruined his health, and ſhut him up in a priſon, he conſoles himſelf with reflecting, that he ſhares the ſame fate which the great wits, his predeceſſors, have ſuffered before him. He is happy even to be wretched with an Otway, a Dryden, or a Savage.

This unfortunate conduct is owing to a miſtaken opinion, too generally adopted; that vice is the mark of laudable ſpirit, and that ſpirit is the characteriſtic of genius. Prudence, caution, common

ſenſe, are, in the idea of many, the concomitants of dullneſs. The phlegmatic diſpoſition of a fool, ſay they, can guide him through life in the ſtraight road of prudence; but the volatility of genius is continually tempted to turn out of the direct path to gather flowers on the ſides, to view every pleaſing proſpect, and to diſcover new ways through unfrequented labyrinths.

But it may be a reaſonable queſtion, whether this propenſity to deviation may not be a weakneſs, rather than a ſuperior ſtrength of mind; whether it is not be cauſed by a reſtleſsneſs of conſtitution, rather than by a more energetic activity, or an acuter perception. Senſibility of mind, and fineneſs of feeling, are always the attendants of true genius. Theſe, which by themſelves conſtitute a good heart, when joined to a good head, naturally have a greater tendency to virtue than to vice: for they are naturally charmed with beauty, and diſguſted with deformity of every kind. Virtue, therefore, who is amiable in the eyes of her enemies,

enemies, muſt have additional charms for thoſe whoſe ſuſceptibility of beauty is more delicate and refined; and vice, who is naturally loathſome, muſt appear uncommonly odious to thoſe who are uncommonly ſhocked at every ſpecies of turpitude.

Nor want there inſtances to prove, that men of the moſt exalted genius can be men of the moſt unſpotted virtue. Addiſon, the glory of our nation, was only equalled in his abilities, by the purity of his morals, the integrity of his heart, and the prudence of his conduct. Pope was a man of exemplary piety and goodneſs. Gay was uncontaminated by the vices of the world; and though inſtances are numerous on the other ſide, yet theſe few are ſufficient for the refutation of that prevalent notion, that genius is incompatible with prudence and virtue.

The folly of thoſe who are only pretenders to genius, and who affect vice as eſſential to the character they aſſume, is as pitiable as it is ridiculous. Their egregious vanity will probably render all

addreſſes to them uſeleſs; but they may take it as an infallible prediction, that dear bought experience will ſoon induce them to wiſh they had altered their conduct, when it ſhall be too late to enjoy the benefits of an early amendment.

The fatal error here expoſed, has led many a parent to undo the child whoſe happineſs he moſt wiſhed to promote. The man of parts and faſhion ſends indeed his boy to ſchool; but cannot bear that he ſhould apply to books, leſt he ſhould be miſtaken for a plodder; or that he ſhould be tractable and modeſt, leſt he ſhould be thought deficient in ſpirit; but forms ſanguine hopes of his future eminence, if he is the ringleader of every riot, and gains the appellation of a Pickle.

Great writers have indeed patronized the cauſe of ſcepticiſm and immorality; but if names are to have weight in this argument; to a Hume, a Rouſſeau, a Voltaire, we may confidently oppoſe, a Lowth, a Hurd, a Johnſon, and many more, whom the Virtues, as well as the Muſes, proudly own.

ESSAY XI.

ON VERBAL CRITICISM.

TO FLORUS.

I Cannot help thinking you were too ſevere in what you ſaid againſt thoſe critics who employed themſelves in verbal diſquiſitions. You well know, that a talent for wit and ridicule can make things, of acknowledged utility, appear vain and frivolous. And to tell you the truth, I believe, you do not keep your exquiſite turn this way, under that reſtraint which candour and moderation ſeem to require.

I muſt indeed allow, that Verbal Criticiſm, like many other laudable purſuits, is apt to deviate into abſurdity, when not under the regulation of reaſon and good ſenſe. Enquiries into the works of nature are highly uſeful and pleaſing;

but even theſe have been perverted by ignorance and bigotry, and have produced thoſe diſgraces of the human mind, alchymy and judicial aſtrology. Inveſtigations of the manners and inſtitutions of antiquity are known to promote knowledge, by aſcertaining ambiguous ſubjects, and to give pleaſure, by gratifying a natural curioſity; theſe however have likewiſe degenerated into all thoſe abſurdities which form the character of the jejune antiquarian, and the trifling virtuoſo.

When you cenſure verbal critics, you certainly forget how much you are indebted to them. Believe me, you would never have had that general acquaintance with the claſſics, had you been obliged to toil through all thoſe difficulties, which the Commentators, at the revival of learning, took ſuch pains to remove. Reſcued from the cells of Monks, whoſe minds were as dark as their habitation, the manuſcripts of antient authors were full of errors and interpolations, and it was impoſſible to read a page without

being embarraſſed with obſcurity and impeded by chaſms, which collation or conjecture only could ſupply. You may laugh, if you pleaſe, at the phlegmatic diſpoſition of thoſe who could go through the drudgery of collating a dozen manuſcript copies, to find the proper place of a conjunction or an adverb; yet, however merry you may be on the occaſion, you will be obliged to acknowledge the utility of the labour. I am aware, that theſe pain-taking ſtudents have been ſtigmatized with the appellation of porters of the republic of letters, and that their works have been called, by way of contempt, the ſcaffoldings of literature: but let it be remembered, that though the greateſt ſhare of praiſe be due to the architect, yet will his plans and models, however ingeniouſly formed, avail but little without the co-operation of the labourer, and the aſſiſtance of the ſcaffold.

But without inſiſting on the advantage derived from this kind of criticiſm, in the illuſtration of antient authors, I think it

it evident, that it deſerves cultivation, were it only becauſe it contributes to aſcertain, and to refine our own language.

If you review the ſtate of Literature, you will find few writers who have attained to elegance in their own language, before it has been examined by grammarians, and reduced to fixed rules of analogy. Strength and vigour they may perhaps have diſplayed, ſince theſe are the genuine products of natural genius. But to the moſt animated ſentiments, and nervous expreſſions, they have been unable to add the grace of a correct and poliſhed ſtyle.

If then we make pretenſions to taſte, and prefer elegance to deformity, and perſpicuity to confuſion, we muſt not refuſe, to verbal criticiſm, that praiſe which we readily beſtow on the other parts of literature.

The world has long been prejudiced againſt compilers of Dictionaries, and has viewed them rather in the light of elaborate plodders, than of men of taſte and genius; but candour muſt confeſs, that learning

learning is more indebted to Dictionaries and Lexicons, than to any other production whatever; ſince, without theſe, the antient writings, thoſe ſources of literature, muſt have remained unintelligible. The Engliſh language has been enriched by the Shakeſpeares, the Miltons, the Lockes of former times; but it may with truth be ſaid, to have been refined and embelliſhed by the grammarians and the great lexicographer of the preſent age. It is from the labours of verbal critics, that our language will receive the only excellences it wanted, purity and correctneſs.

But I forbear to expatiate farther on this ſubject, becauſe I almoſt perſuade myſelf, that you were not ſerious in your invectives againſt this ſpecies of learning. No, Florus, I can never be perſuaded, that any man would have beſtowed ſo much pains in the acquiſition of that which he did not eſteem, nor can I think you deſpiſe an art in which you are known to excel.

ESSAY XII.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN DRS. SWIFT AND BENTLEY.

BENTLEY.

SPARE your ſneers, good Dr. Swift. In theſe regions, where wit is not permitted to excite mirth at the expence of merit, and where reaſon muſt juſtify ridicule, I believe you will find I hold a much higher place in the eſteem of others, than your petulance would willingly allow me.

SWIFT.

Moſt reverend, worthy, erudite Dr. Bentley, ſorry am I to find, that any of my levities could have drawn upon me the heavy weight of your diſpleaſure. Little did I think, that the traſh of ſo inconſiderable a ſcribbler as myſelf, could have attracted the attention of a venerable critic,

critic, whoſe every moment, precious to the public, was employed in the important taſk of adjuſting the place of an adverb or a conjunction, in ſome mutilated antient. You ſurely miſtook, when you thought I wore a ſneer on my countenance. It is with an awe, ſimilar to that with which I ſee a Socrates, or a Plato, that I look upon Thee, thou great benefactor to mankind, who haſt devoted thy life to the uſeful art of verbal criticiſm.

BENTLEY.

Still at your beloved irony! I pretend not to combat you with your own weapons, in the management of which, I acknowledge, you have gained a maſtery. But if you are willing to be upon equal terms, to lay aſide wit, and to carry on the conteſt under the direction of reaſon, I truſt I ſhall be able to match you: and if, as you have alleged, I had a blameable ſeverity in my ſtyle and manner in the upper regions, I voluntarily diveſt myſelf of it; upon condition, that you

you consent to correct that malignant propensity of your's to turn the most serious persons and things to ridicule.

SWIFT.

Well, Doctor, raillery apart, what have you to offer as an apology for having perverted a sagacity bestowed for useful pursuits, in idle disquisitions on useless subjects of antiquity? How will you support that dignity which you arrogated on the discovery of a particle, omitted by the oscitancy of transcribers, without any sensible detriment to the author's meaning?

BENTLEY.

If I were disposed to recriminate, I might prove not only the inutility, but the ill consequences of many of your works; but I wave the point which would, perhaps, involve us in too warm a dispute: all I contend for is, that if I was not entitled to admiration, I did not deserve contempt.

SWIFT.

You laid too great a ſtreſs on trifles, and you carried on your controverſies with a ſcurrilous acrimony, ill becoming the votaries of literature and humanity.

BENTLEY.

Great provocations, unmerited ill-uſage, and a natural warmth of temper, betrayed me, I own, into a vehemence, which, in my cooler moments, I diſapproved. But as for the trifling nature of my enquiries, and the futility of my productions, I am under no doubt, but upon a little conſideration, you will be induced to alter your opinion in thoſe particulars. Does not the omiſſion of a ſingle word frequently occaſion an impenetrable obſcurity? Is not obſcurity at all times painful? Do not falſe readings often turn the fineſt paſſages into barbarous nonſenſe? Do not the faults of incorrect, mutilated editions ſpoil much of the pleaſure reſulting from the beauties of an author? Your own experience will force you to anſwer in the affirmative. Theſe were the

the inconveniences I endeavoured to obviate; and if my conjectures were ſometimes erroneous, even my enemies will allow them to have been generally ingenious. To facilitate the underſtanding of the antients, will be acknowledged, by every ſcholar, to deſerve well of the republic of letters, and this it will be confeſſed I did.

SWIFT.

Of your merits in this minute kind of criticiſm, I acknowledge myſelf an incompetent judge, for freely to tell you the truth, I never could read an author with a microſcopic eye. Indeed, I never wiſhed to turn my attention from the beauties of the author, to ſurvey the faults of a printer, or of a tranſcriber. It was enough for me if I underſtood the meaning of a paſſage, which with a little ſhare of ſagacity I could commonly do, even if a particle were omitted. However, I grant, you might have a great ſhare of that kind of merit which belongs to a diligent corrector of the preſs; but what ſay you to thoſe ſtudies, the

the importance of which ſeemed to be about equal to that of enquiries into the manner in which the old Greeks and Romans folded their gowns, or buckled their ſhoes?

BENTLEY.

The veneration with which we look upon thoſe antients, renders the ſmalleſt circumſtance, which throws light upon their manners and cuſtoms, an object worthy the inveſtigation of the true ſcholar. Superficial ſmatterers may laugh, but the man of profound learning will deem ſuch enquiries as tend to elucidate obſcurities, or which at leaſt furniſh matter of amuſing ſpeculation, worthy of ſerious regard, and diligent purſuit.

SWIFT.

To tell you the truth, my talent was ridicule, I thought you an object of it, and I did not take time to conſider of the juſtice and propriety of my conduct.

BENTLEY.

I look upon you as almoſt incorrigible, but I will however give you a piece of

advice, which though it may come too late to influence your conduct, may rectify your ſentiments. Never let your fondneſs for a joke tempt you ſo far to injure an individual, and mankind in general, as to throw contempt on characters that have juſt pretenſions to learning or virtue.

SWIFT.

I never had any malevolent deſigns againſt you, nor do I know how you will make good the oblique charge of having done you an injury.

BENTLEY.

Had it not been for the petulance of your ridicule and your friend's ſatire, my name, which is now ſeldom mentioned but with a ſneer, would have been held in admiration: and let me aſſure you, if you know it not, that to make a man deſpiſed who deſerves to be honoured, is to injure him in the higheſt degree. You would have acted more like a man of principle if you had ſpared merit, and exerted

exerted the force of your wit againſt folly, ignorance, and vice.

SWIFT.

This charge I may retort with a little variation; for believe me, Doctor, you would have acted more like a man of ſenſe and character, if you had diſplayed that vehemence, which you ſhewed in literary diſputes, in putting to ſhame, irreligion and immorality.

BENTLEY.

I will neither boaſt, nor retaliate. Diſputes, however vehement, are ſeldom productive of conviction. Adieu then —if I excelled not in philology, allow me ſome merit in my theological labours, in purſuits more uſeful to mankind, and ſuch as were peculiarly conſiſtent with your character as well as with my own. Whatever becomes of my Horace and my Milton, forget not my Boylean lectures.

ESSAY XIII.

STORY OF ARISTOCLEA FROM PLUTARCH*.

ARISTOCLEA, the daughter of Theophanes, was celebrated throughout Greece for her virtue, her beauty, and her accompliſhments. Merit, ſo conſpicuous as hers, could not but attract the regard of the Grecian youth, ever ſuſceptible of the fineſt emotions of love. Among the reſt of her admirers, Strato and Calliſthenes were ſo happy as to obtain peculiar marks of diſtinction.

Strato had all the recommendations which wealth and power can beſtow, and to do him juſtice, was not entirely deſtitute of perſonal merit. The only objection, which could with the appearance of reaſon be made to him, was, that he

* Taken from his ερωτικαι διηγησις, or Love Tales, but not literally tranſlated.

was

was conſiderably advanced beyond that period which is called the flower of youth; an objection which commonly has great weight in a female heart.

Calliſthenes yielded to Strato in fortune, intereſt, and family, but his perſon was more engaging, his manners more polite, and his acquirements more agreeable. There was a peculiar modeſty in his addreſs, which probably might be encreaſed by a conſciouſneſs of the ſmallneſs of his fortune: but this circumſtance tended to promote his intereſt; for however it depreſſed his ſpirit, it taught him that ſubmiſſive ſoftneſs, which made him appear amiable in the eyes of Ariſtoclea.

Strato, it muſt be confeſſed, was the more ardent lover, and his paſſion had been inflamed by an accidental ſight of his fair charmer while ſhe was bathing, one ſummer morning, in a little rivulet that glided through her father's garden.

Calliſthenes, perhaps in reality, felt as ſtrong a paſſion as his rival, yet was he leſs aſſiduous in his addreſſes, from deſpair of ſucceeding againſt a competitor

ſo much his ſuperior in rank and fortune.

The father of Ariſtoclea, was much embarraſſed by the importunities of the two lovers, but would gladly have given his conſent to him whoſe poſſeſſions were the largeſt, had he not been cautious of interfering in the choice of his daughter. After many delays, it was at laſt agreed, on all ſides, to refer the affair to a neighbour of great wiſdom and experience, by whoſe deciſion it was reſolved to abide.

In the mean time, Strato was informed by a confident of Ariſtoclea, whom he had bribed with liberal preſents, that he poſſeſſed the firſt place in the affections of his miſtreſs. Animated by this intelligence, he determined to break off the agreement of referring the affair to a ſtranger, and to leave it to be decided by the moſt proper judge, Ariſtoclea herſelf. Calliſthenes readily acceded to the propoſal, from a conviction, that if he ſtood any chance, it could be only from the deciſion of the fair object of his love.

The

The father, who had previouſly been aſſured by Strato, that his daughter had ſhewn him a preference, entered without heſitation into the agreement, and appointed an early day for the final determination.

During this uneaſy interval, various were the emotions of the two lovers. Strato already anticipated his happineſs, and wantoned in imagination on all the charms of his miſtreſs. Calliſthenes, on the contrary, felt all the pain and anguiſh of ſuſpended hope.

At length, the important hour arrived. Strato approached to hear his doom with a ſmile of confidence; Calliſthenes in all the dejection of deſpair. How ſuddenly were their ſeveral emotions exchanged, when the lovely fair-one declared in favour of the deſponding Calliſthenes! Strato, however, after many efforts, got the better of his amazement and chagrin, aſſumed an air of chearfulneſs, and beſought the happy pair to grant him one requeſt, which was to permit him to be preſent at the nuptial ceremony. A re-

queſt ſo reaſonable, none could deny; and amidſt the congratulations of the whole company, the next day was fixed for completing the union.

The next day arrived, and the lovely pair appeared adorned with all the charms of beauty, and the ſmiles of innocence and joy. Strato ſeemed not the leaſt happy on the occaſion; but the ſcene was ſoon changed to melancholy and deſpair. On a ſudden, at a ſignal given by Strato, a company of armed men ruſhed from an ambuſcade, and ſeized the unhappy Calliſthenes. Strato endeavoured to run away with the lovely maid, but while ſhe was ſtruggling in his arms, ſhe fainted away, and, in the violence of her agitation, fell lifeleſs to the ground. Calliſthenes was never heard of more, and Strato concluded the cataſtrophe, by plunging a dagger into his own breaſt, and falling on the body of the unfortunate Ariſtoclea.

ESSAY XIV.

ON THE FLUCTUATION OF TASTE.

THE opinions of mankind are as much divided on the objects of pure intellect, as on thoſe which fall under the immediate obſervation of ſenſe; and the revolutions of literature will evince, on an accurate retroſpect, that the faſhions of wit have almoſt as frequently changed, as the modes of dreſs. To mark the ſtages, and to trace the progreſs of theſe revolutions, I leave to more laborious enquiry, and more acute inveſtigation. It may, however, be pleaſing to the imagination to compare the taſte which prevails at preſent, with that which immediately preceded it, and to diſcover whether of the two is the more agreeable to nature and to truth.

Dryden,

Dryden, Pope, Addiſon, and their contemporaries, aſſumed the pen with a full conviction, that all excellence in writing was founded on a cloſe imitation of the antients. With this perſuaſion, they neglected the compoſitions of their own countrymen, and formed themſelves on the models of the Auguſtan age. Their imitation was ſucceſsful. Their times were captivated with their writings, and every ſuſceptible reader acknowledged, that the nearer they approached the antients, the more they abounded in all the ſimple graces of natural beauty.

At this period, the Engliſh poetry arrived at that ſtandard of perfection, in the admiration of which, mankind have agreed for the ſpace of ſeventeen hundred years; and to which, after the ſlight deviations of caprice, they have conſtantly recurred with reiterated ardour.

But the love of novelty was impatient for ſupplies, and was ready, for the ſake of variety, to acquieſce with inferior excellence. Productions, therefore, of which no archetype could be recognized

in

in the volumes of antiquity, were received with eagerneſs, becauſe they relieved the ſatiety of unchanging perfection.

Although theſe ſubſidiary compoſitions could not boaſt a claſſical deſcent, yet were they not deſtitute of Gothic progenitors. Books of romance and chivalry were replete with ideas congenial to the ſpecies of poetry now adopted. The works of Arioſto and Spenſer, and ſome of the ſmaller pieces of Milton, were the avowed models of theſe poets: and though their ideas are ſometimes foreign to nature, and derived from the unexplored regions of fancy, yet have they ſomething pleaſingly uncouth. Boileau and Addiſon have very accurately characteriſed the uſual ſtyle of this ſpecies of poetry in one word, by calling it "Tinſel."

Some have inſinuated, that there is a vein of this glittering nothingneſs in the tranſlations of Pope; but it is ſo overlaid with the ſolid ore of genuine poetry, that it gives the general reader no offence. A few celebrated writers of the preſent

preſent times have at length confeſſedly adopted the *clinquant*, to the excluſion of the ſimplicity of claſſic elegance. Nor can the general reception their works have met with, be matter of ſurprize; for let it be remembered, that there have been times, when the complicated deformity of Gothic building was preferred to the regular ſymmetry of Grecian architecture.

The Elegy in a country church-yard, breathes a ſpirit of melancholy which flatters the imagination of an Engliſhman. It is ſolemn, it is pictureſque: but after all, it is thought, by ſome, to be no more than a confuſed heap of ſplendid ideas, thrown together without order and without proportion; and to reſemble the looſe jewels in the artiſt's caſket before they are formed into a diadem. The odes of the ſame author, ſaid to be more unintelligible than the ænigma of a ſphinx, are in the ſame predicament, and preſent to the mind ideas ſimilar to thoſe which ariſe from a ſurvey of the clouds empurpled by the ſetting ſun. The variegated

gated hues are indeed beautiful; but they quickly vaniſh, and leave no idea but that of a tranſient aſſemblage of viſionary colours.

Maſon has ſometimes ſhewn, that he is capable of true claſſical poetry. But the taſte of the age, and the example of his friend, have led him into the fields of fancy, where he has ſoared, on the pinions of poetry, far above the aching ſight of common ſenſe *.

The

* The writer of theſe remarks has felt all the beauties of the odes and elegies of theſe two poets, and means not to depreciate their characters. He wiſhed, however, that their works might not be conſidered as models, as they ſeem already to have become among the rhymers of the age, who overwhelm us with a deluge of ſtanzas, which they are inclined to think equal to Gray's elegy, becauſe they are loaded with ſhining epithets, and are written in alternate verſe. The odes of theſe imitators are ſeldom like thoſe of our admired bards in any thing but their worſt qualities, ſome degree of obſcurity and inflation. Sorry ſhould he be, if an attempt to diſcountenance affected and unnatural compoſition ſhould have given one moment's uneaſineſs to any living author of merit. He thinks every writer of genius, ſuch as the two poetical friends

The vulgar herd of poets have followed the track of their ſuperiors. The numerous contributors to our poetical collections, have, in the ſame gaudy ſtyle, ſoared in odes, and wept in elegies: and a Caledonian adventurer has completed the work, with the nonſenſical jargon of his Oſſian.

This ſeems to have been the taſte which prevailed immediately before that which now begins to dawn upon us, and to promiſe a revival of pure Attic and Auguſtan wit. It is true, the glimmerings are yet but faint. We may, however, venture to aſſure ourſelves of approaching day at the firſt appearance of twilight.

friends undoubtedly were, an object of eſteem, however he may have erred by a compliance with a vitiated taſte; and he declares, that nothing which he has advanced on the ſubject proceeded from malignant motives. It is true, that Goldſmith was no admirer of the preſent faſhionable odes and elegies: but Goldſmith was not a man of ſcience or of well digeſted learning, and there are ſome who will not allow thoſe to be critics, who are only qualified for the office by the liberality of nature, in beſtowing on them a feeling heart, and a warm imagination.

The

The favourable reception of the Traveller, and the Deſerted Village, poems very different from the glittering productions of the inflated poetaſter, gives reaſon to prognoſticate a return to the forſaken imitation of Greece and Rome. Theſe poems, indeed, are not to be pronounced faultleſs in their kind. They are however, in ſome meaſure, formed on the antient model, and have obtained a popularity; points ſufficient for our preſent argument. The inflated poetaſter has ſtill many favourers, and that theſe ſhould deny Goldſmith the ſmalleſt degree of poetical merit, is not ſurpriſing, ſince they who can admire the "enflure" of the former, are incapacitated from reliſhing the ſimplicity of the latter; as thoſe who riot in the banquets of gluttons, have no appetite for the plain, but wholeſome viands of the rural cottager.

Whatever may be the execution of theſe two poems, the deſign is laudable; and their author might have felicitated himſelf, as inſtrumental to the baniſhment of two enormous abſurdities from the republic

blic of letters; the barbariſm of Gothic poetry, and the dramatic monſter of weeping comedy.

That a taſte for claſſical compoſition may be univerſally revived, every rational critic will ardently wiſh: ſince every rational critic will dare to aſſert, in ſpite of the imputation of pedantic bigotry, that to deviate from the antients is to deviate from excellence *.

* "I muſt entirely agree with Boileau," ſays Addiſon, "that one verſe in Virgil is worth all the tinſel of Taſſo." See Spectator, Goldſmith's Beauties of Engliſh Poeſy, Life of Parnell, Spence's Eſſay on the Odyſſey, &c.

The popularity of Gray's ſtanzas is a ſufficient proof of their great merit. But his odes, notwithſtanding their beauties, are not popular. They are above the comprehenſion of the common reader. Their author was informed of this, and added explanatory notes, though not without evident diſpleaſure.

With regard to the faſhionable odes, they do indeed reſemble ſome of the flighty obſcurities of Pindar, and they are not quite unlike ſome of the ſongs of the chorus in the Greek tragedy; of which Eraſmus ſays, "Nuſquam mihi magis ineptiſſe videtur "antiquitas quam in hujuſmodi choris, ubi dum ni-"mium affectat novè loqui, *vitiavit eloquentiam*; "dumque verborum miracula venatur, in rerum ju-"dicio ceſſavit."

ESSAY XV.

ON THE INEQUALITIES OF GENIUS.

THE experience of every man, who has devoted himſelf to literature, will evince the truth of the remark, that there are times when the mind, however impelled by inclination, or urged by neceſſity, is incapable of ſubmitting to the confinement of application. The livelieſt imaginations, and the ſtrongeſt intellects, are ſometimes bewildered in dullneſs and ſtupidity, and a Homer nods with all the drowſineſs of a Bavius.

There are inequalities of excellence in every author, whether antient or modern. The moſt admired productions have ſome parts, in which not only no merit is viſible, but which abound with faults. It can neither be ſuppoſed, that the failures ariſe from inability, or that they they are voluntary. Their authors ac-

knowledged excellencies in other performances, will not admit the former; and their ſolicitude for the ſucceſs of their works, excludes the latter ſuppoſition. Such an effect can, therefore, be attributed to no cauſe, but the unaccountable inequalities of the fineſt genius.

The Engliſh can boaſt a numerous train of writers, who have, in their ſeveral departments, approached very near to the ſtandard of perfection: but ſcarcely one of them can be named, whoſe works are not deformed by compoſitions utterly unworthy of him. It is hardly credible, that the author of Paradiſe Loſt could have produced ſome of thoſe ſonnets which paſs under his name, but which bear no mark of his genius. The poet, who wrote the Ode on Cæcilia's day, compoſed a ſet of wretched tragedies in rhyme; the ode was, indeed, dictated by genius, but the tragedies aroſe from no other inſpiration than that of want.

In this point, as well as in many others, there is an exact analogy between the moral and literary world. It has long

been the complaint of the experienced, that no human foreſight, no prudence, can at all times enſure proſperity, and avert ill-fortune. Something ſtill ariſes to baffle the counſels of the wiſe, and to counteract the intentions of the good. The Roman ſatiriſt has indeed aſſerted, that fortune is a deity of our own creation, and that he, who ſubmits to the guidance of prudence, needs not the interpoſition of any ſupernatural power; but experience proves the aſſertion to be rather the effuſion of rigid and affected philoſophy, than the cool ſuggeſtion of well informed reaſon. The obſervation of a ſacred moraliſt, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong, is more agreeable to truth, and has been confirmed by the repeated teſtimony of ſome thouſand years. Wiſdom is often found guilty of folly, and ingenuity of error.

Of the fluctuation of mental vigour in the ſame individual, there is a remarkable inſtance in the great Newton. Of him it is ſaid, that in the advanced

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period of his life, he was unable to comprehend his own works. That underſtanding which once penetrated far beyond the limits of the viſible creation, became ſo debilitated, as to be incapable of retracing its own progreſs—A memorable inſtance of human infirmity, ſufficient to humble pride, and ſilence envy.

As merit cannot always enſure ſucceſs, even in the exertion of its peculiar excellence, ſo is it by no means certain of obtaining a good reception in the world: for hiſtory and experience furniſh many examples to prove, that wealth and power are not the neceſſary conſequences of wiſdom and virtue. To be wiſe and virtuous, may be learned from an Epictetus; to be fortunate, from others *.

It might indeed be ſuppoſed, that ſtrength of intellects, accuracy of judgment, and extenſive erudition, would either ſecure to themſelves good fortune, or would, at leaſt, be rewarded by the world; but it is an inconteſtible truth,

* Fortunam ex aliis. VIRG.

that

that poets and philoſophers, of every age and every nation, have been as much diſtinguiſhed by their indigence, as their ingenuity. Poverty and poetry are almoſt ſynonymous, while the unerring experience of mankind has reduced it to a proverb, that "fools have fortune."

The inſufficiency of merit, and of honeſt endeavours, to the acquiſition of fame and fortune, has given occaſion to the diſcontented to repine, and cenſure the œconomy of human affairs; but they, who are converſant in the inveſtigation of final cauſes, eaſily perceive, that ſuch a diſpenſation tends to perfect virtue, by the exerciſe of patience.

ESSAY XVI.

ACCOUNT OF A STROLLING PLAYER.

FROM AMICUS.

AS I was ſauntering, a few days ago, on one of the public walks, I could not help particularly remarking a young man, whoſe dreſs ſhewed marks of a ſhabby gentility, and whoſe countenance wore the aſpect of a ſettled melancholy.

The appearance of wretchedneſs, in whatever ſituation, is always ſufficient to awaken my curioſity. I felt myſelf irreſiſtibly impelled to enquire into the hiſtory of a perſon who ſeemed to be completely miſerable. After having walked a conſiderable time, I perceived him to throw himſelf, in a diſconſolate attitude, on one of the ſeats of the walk. I did not neglect the opportunity; but ſeating

ſeating myſelf by his ſide, prevailed on him, after ſome introductory converſation, to give me his hiſtory, which he did in the following words:

"Yes, Sir," ſaid he, "though my "preſent appearance may ſeem to inva- "lidate my aſſertion, I aſſure you I was "the ſon of one of the moſt opulent "traders in the metropolis. I might at "this time have been enjoying all the "happineſs that affluence can beſtow; "but now, alas! I have no where to "lay my head, no refuge to which I can "fly for comfort. I am abandoned to "the wide world without a friend; and "one conſideration aggravates all my "miſery—I have deſerved my ſufferings, "and cannot juſtly complain."

Here he pauſed to conceal a tear which was juſt burſting from his eyes. After he had a little recovered himſelf, his countenance gradually grew more ſerene, and he proceeded with leſs emotion.

"When I was at the age of eleven, "my father placed me at a celebrated

" grammar-ſchool—there I ſpent the happieſt days of my life. Nature, as I was told, had given me parts; I made a rapid progreſs in claſſical learning; all was encouragement, all was hope, and all was happineſs. But in the midſt of my improvements, my father reſolved, in oppoſition to the advice of my maſter, to remove me from ſchool, and to ſettle me in his own counting-houſe. My maſter urged, that though I might perhaps ſucceed in a learned profeſſion, yet the vivacity of my diſpoſition would be an obſtacle to my proſperity in a mercantile employment. My father, ſenſible of the lucrative advantages of an eſtabliſhed trade, was deaf to theſe remonſtrances; and on a fatal day I entered into engagements to plod at the deſk and the counter for ſeven years.

" But nature is not to be conſtrained by indentures. Inſtead of caſting up ſums, and meaſuring ells, I employed my time in the peruſal of Shakeſpeare, in compoſing Epilogues

" and

" and Farces, and in diſcuſſing the me-
" rits of every new dramatic production.
" Inſtead of ſpending my evenings in
" poſting accounts, and examining my
" ledger, I was always attending the
" performances of a Foote or a Garrick.
" At length, by conſtant frequenting the
" Playhouſes, and mixing with con-
" temptible ſcioliſts, who called them-
" ſelves theatrical critics, I became ſo
" enamoured of the Stage, as to look
" upon dramatic entertainments as con-
" ſtituting the moſt important buſineſs,
" as well as the moſt agreeable enjoy-
" ment of human life. The ſhop con-
" tinually reſounded with my rants, in
" imitation of ſome favourite actor; and
" I went ſo far as to treat with the
" purchaſers of a yard of Iriſh, with a
" theatrical tone, and a dramatic action.

" I had ſo great an opinion of my
" own talents, that like the immortal
" Shakeſpeare, I was ambitious of ſhining
" both as an actor and a writer. Accord-
" ingly I finiſhed a Comedy with great
" care and pains, and preſented it to one

" of

" of the managers, who returned it upon
" my hands, with evident marks of con-
" tempt. By no means dejected, I was
" reſolved to try my ſucceſs as an actor.
" But, after having, with great difficulty,
" obtained permiſſion to ſpeak before the
" managers, and a circle of their friends,
" who ſeemed to enjoy my diſtreſs, I was
" again rejected.

" Though I could not ſucceed at the
" Theatres, I was reſolved to exert my
" abilities at ſpouting and diſputing clubs.
" And here, indeed, I eaſily made a con-
" ſpicuous figure; as I had the advan-
" tage of a claſſical education, and as
" moſt of my competitors had no edu-
" cation at all. The moſt important
" topics of religion, learning, and poli-
" tics, I diſcuſſed with more volubility
" than the graveſt prelate, the pro-
" foundeſt academic, or the craftieſt
" ſtateſman. But I triumphed, as it
" were, without an enemy, and the fa-
" cility of the conqueſt diminiſhed the
" pleaſure of it. I ſoon became weary
" of dry argumentation, and eagerly

" panted

" panted to wear the buſkin, and to
" mouth the ſonorous periods of ſome
" tragic bard.

" It happened that I had formed a
" connection with a young member of
" the club, whoſe genius was entirely
" ſimilar to my own, and who had been
" engaged with a ſtrolling company of
" players. He had often ſolicited me to
" go with him on an acting tour into
" the north of England; and I had as
" often refuſed, from a principle of pride.
" But at length, an ardent deſire of ex-
" hibiting on a ſtage, overcame every
" regard to duty, and every compunction
" of conſcience. In a fatal hour (I
" bluſh to mention it) I embezzled a ſum
" of money with which I was truſted in
" the courſe of buſineſs, packed up my
" clothes, and accompanied a ſet of vaga-
" bonds, who, like myſelf, had aban-
" doned every reputable occupation, and
" devoted themſelves to infamy and in-
" digence, for the ſake of enjoying the
" plaudits of a few ruſtics aſſembled in a
" barn.

" And

" And now commences the æra of all
" my miſery. The money I had frau-
" dulently taken, was ſoon ſquandered
" away in a ſociety of thoughtleſs mor-
" tals, who regarded not to-morrow, if
" they could feaſt to day. We were, in-
" deed, received with applauſe; but the
" audience was commonly ſo ſcanty, that
" the expences of repreſentation often
" exceeded the receipts. In every town
" we were looked upon with ſuſpicion,
" and treated as vagrants. We were
" ſometimes reduced to ſuch extremities,
" by the expences of travelling, and the
" loſſes of acting to empty barns, that
" we have wanted even food to ſupport
" nature. Above charity, we could not
" be relieved, and deſtitute of credit,
" we could not be truſted. At length
" I ſaw my folly, and after various re-
" ſolves, ſent to a friend to enquire whe-
" ther my father was diſpoſed to receive
" me, ſhould I return and confeſs my
" fault. How, alas! was I ſtruck, when
" I was told in anſwer, that my father
" died a few days ago of a broken heart;

" and

" and that his death was ſo ſudden, that " he had not time to alter his will, in " which, in the firſt rage after his diſ- " covery of my elopement, he had cut " me off with a ſhilling.

" It is impoſſible to give you an ade- " quate idea of my grief on this occa- " ſion, and I ſhall only inform you, that " it would have proved fatal, had it not " been ſoon removed by emotions of a " different kind. During my indiſpoſi- " tion, one of the actreſſes of our com- " pany, whoſe beauty is only exceeded " by the goodneſs of her heart, watched " me with all the anxiety of a parent, " and ſoothed me under the horrors of " deſpair, with the ſofteſt blandiſhments " of tenderneſs. I ſoon felt a flame " kindling in my breaſt, which was an- " ſwered with a ſympathetic paſſion. In " ſhort, I was no ſooner reſtored to health " and vigour, than I married the lovely " Emily: we have now been united near " a year, and yeſterday ſhe was ſafely " delivered of twins. That ſhe is well, " thank Heaven; but, alas, the reflec-

" tion,

" tion, that I am deſtitute of all the " means that can give her eaſe, or pro- " vide for her off-ſpring, ſharpens all " the darts of ill fortune, and embitters " every woe."

Here he ſtopped, and I was obliged to leave him, after having given him an invitation to my houſe, where I hope to be able to alleviate his misfortunes, without hurting his ſenſibility. But I cannot help expreſſing my wiſh, that all who, deluded by a heated imagination, feel themſelves inclined to quit the comforts of a parent and a home in purſuit of a profeſſion which is prohibited by law, and which conſtantly entails on its followers miſery and diſgrace, may receive a proper impreſſion from this example.

ESSAY XVII.

ON THE PLEASURES OF REFLECTION.

THAT the enjoyments of the underſtanding exceed the pleaſures of ſenſe, is a truth, confeſſed by all who are capable of exerting the faculties of thinking in their full vigour. But by theſe pleaſures are generally underſtood ſublime contemplations on ſubjects of ſcience and abſtruſe diſquiſition; contemplations which can only be the reſult of uncommon powers, and extraordinary efforts.

But there are intellectual pleaſures of another kind; to the enjoyment of which, neither abilities nor learning are required. Theſe are no other than the Pleaſures of Reflection, which are open to the illiterate mechanic, as well as to the ſage philoſopher, and conſtitute ſome of the ſweeteſt ſatisfactions of human life.

There

There are few who have not felt pleaſing ſenſations ariſing from a retroſpective view of the firſt period of their lives. To recollect the puerile amuſements, the petty anxieties, and the eager purſuits of childhood, is a taſk in which all delight. It is common to obſerve, that on no ſubject do men dwell with ſuch pleaſure, as the boyiſh tricks and wanton pranks which they practiſed at ſchool. The hoary head looks back with a ſmile of complacency, mixed with regret, on the ſeaſon when health glowed on the cheek, when lively ſpirits warmed the heart, and when toil ſtrung the nerves with vigour.

Cicero has remarked, that events the moſt diſagreeable, during their immediate influence, give an exquiſite ſatisfaction when their conſequences have ceaſed; and Æneas ſolaces his companions, under the hardſhips they endured, with the conſideration, that the remembrance of their ſufferings would, one day, give them ſatisfaction. That theſe ſentiments are juſt, is well known to thoſe who have enjoyed the converſation

tion of the ſoldier. Battles, ſkirmiſhes, and ſieges, at which, perhaps, he trembled during the action, furniſh him with topics of converſation, and ſources of pleaſure, for the remainder of his life.

Reflection is the moſt proper employment, and the ſweeteſt ſatisfaction, in a rational old age. Deſtitute of ſtrength and vigour, neceſſary for bodily exertions, and furniſhed with obſervations by experience, the old man finds his greateſt pleaſure to conſiſt in wandering in imagination over paſt ſcenes of delight, in recounting the adventures of his youth, the viciſſitudes of human life, and the public events to which he is proud of having been an eye-witneſs. Of ſo exalted a nature are theſe enjoyments, that Theologiſts have not heſitated to aſſert, that to recollect a well-ſpent life, is to anticipate the bliſs of a future exiſtence.

The profeſſors of philoſophy, who will be acknowledged to have underſtood the nature of true and ſubſtantial pleaſure better than the buſy, the gay, and the

diſſipated, have ever ſhewn a predilection for privacy and ſolitude. No other cauſe have they aſſigned for their conduct in forſaking ſociety, than that the noiſe and hurry of the world is incompatible with the exertion of calm reaſon, and diſpaſſionate reflection. The apophthegm of that antient, who ſaid, "he was never "leſs alone than when by himſelf," is not to be conſidered as a mere epigrammatic turn. In vain was it to purſue philoſophy in the Saburra—ſhe was only to be courted, with ſucceſs, in the ſequeſtered ſhade of rural retirement.

Were the powers of reflection cultivated by habit, mankind would at all times be able to derive a pleaſure from their own breaſts, as rational as it is exalted. To the attainment of this happineſs, a ſtrict adherence to the rules of virtue is neceſſary; for let it be remembered, that none can feel the Pleaſures of Reflection, who do not enjoy the peace of innocence.

ESSAY XVIII.

REMARKS ON THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF DR. JORTIN.

THE mind feels a ſecret complacency in contemplating characters eminent for virtue, learning, and religion; and there are few who are not delighted, as well as inſtructed, by the praiſes beſtowed on departed merit. Notwithſtanding the depravity of human nature, virtue ſtill appears amiable to the vicious, and knowledge to the ignorant. Experience, indeed, ſeems to confirm the opinion of Plato, that goodneſs, excluſive of its collateral advantages, is poſſeſſed of charms irreſiſtibly captivating.

A review of the life of the late Dr. Jortin, cannot but ſuggeſt the moſt pleaſing reflections. As a poet, a divine, a philoſopher, and a man, he ſerved the

cauſe of religion, learning, and morality. There are, indeed, many writers whoſe reputation is more diffuſed among the vulgar and illiterate, but few will be found whoſe names ſtand higher than Dr. Jortin's in the eſteem of the judicious. His Latin poetry is claſſically elegant. His Diſcourſes and Diſſertations, ſenſible, ingenious, and argumentative. His remarks on Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, intereſting and impartial. His Sermons, replete with ſound ſenſe and rational morality, expreſſed in a ſtyle, ſimple, pure, and attic.

Simplicity of ſtyle is a grace, which though it may not captivate at firſt ſight, is ſure in the end to give permanent ſatisfaction. It does not excite admiration, but it raiſes eſteem. It does not warm to rapture, but it ſooths to complacency. Unſkilful writers ſeldom aim at this excellence. They imagine, that what is natural and common, cannot be beautiful. Every thing in their compoſitions muſt be ſtrained, every thing affected: but Dr. Jortin had ſtudied the antients, and

and perhaps formed himſelf on the model of Xenophon. He wrote on ſubjects of morality, and morality is founded on reaſon, and reaſon is always cool and diſpaſſionate. A florid declamation, embelliſhed with rhetorical figures, and animated with pathetic deſcription, may indeed amuſe the fancy, and raiſe a tranſient emotion in the heart, but rational diſcourſe alone can convince the underſtanding, and reform the conduct.

The firſt efforts of genius have commonly been in poetry. Unreſtrained by the frigidity of argument, and the confinement of rules, the young mind gladly indulges the flights of imagination. Cicero, as well as many other antient philoſophers, orators, and hiſtorians, is known to have ſacrificed to the Muſes in his earlier productions. Dr. Jortin adds to the number of thoſe who confirm the obſervation. In his *Luſus Poetici*, one of the firſt of his works, are united claſſical language, tender ſentiment, and harmonious verſe. Among the modern Latin poets, there are few who do not

yield to Dr. Jortin. His ſapphics, on the ſtory of Bacchus and Ariadne, are eaſy, elegant, and poetical. The little Ode, in which the calm life of the philoſopher is compared to the gentle ſtream gliding through a ſilent grove, is highly pleaſing to the mind, and is perfectly elegant in the compoſition. The Lyrics are indeed all excellent. The Poem on the Immortality of the Soul, is ingenious, poetical, and an exact imitation of the ſtyle of Lucretius. In ſhort, the whole collection is ſuch as would ſcarcely have diſgraced a Roman in the age of an Auguſtus.

Time, if it does not cool the fire of imagination, certainly ſtrengthens the powers of the judgment. As our author advanced in life, he cultivated his reaſon rather than his fancy, and deſiſted from his efforts in poetry, to exert his abilities in the diſquiſitions of criticiſm. His obſervations on one of the Fathers of Engliſh Poetry, need but to be more generally known, in order to be more generally approved.

Claſſical

Claſſical productions are rather amuſing than inſtructive. His works of this kind are all juvenile, and naturally flowed from a claſſical education. Theſe however were but preparatory to his higher deſigns, and ſoon gave way to the more important enquiries which were peculiar to his profeſſion. His Diſcourſes on the Chriſtian Religion, one of the firſt fruits of his theological purſuits, abound with that ſound ſenſe and ſolid argument, which entitle their author to a rank very near the celebrated Grotius.

His Diſſertations are equally remarkable for taſte, learning, originality and ingenuity.

His life of Eraſmus has extended his reputation beyond the limits of his native country, and eſtabliſhed his literary character in the remoteſt Univerſities of Europe. Eraſmus had long been an object of univerſal admiration, and it is matter of ſurprize, that his life had never been written with accuracy and judgment. This taſk was reſerved for Dr. Jortin, and the avidity with which the work was

received by the learned, is a proof of the merit of the execution. It abounds with matter intereſting to the ſcholar; but the ſtyle and method are ſuch as will not pleaſe every reader. There is a careleſsneſs in it, and a want of dignity and delicacy.

His remarks on Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory are full of manly ſenſe, ingenious ſtrictures, and profound erudition. The work is highly beneficial to mankind, as it repreſents that ſuperſtition which diſgraced human nature, in its proper light, and gives a right ſenſe of the advantages derived from religious reformation. He every where expreſſes himſelf with peculiar vehemence againſt the infatuation of bigotry and fanaticiſm. Convinced, that true happineſs is founded on a right uſe of the reaſoning powers, he makes it the ſcope of all his religious works, to lead mankind from the errors of imagination to attend to the dictates of diſpaſſionate reaſon.

Poſthumous publications, it has been remarked, are uſually inferior in merit

to thoſe which are publiſhed in an author's life-time. And indeed the opinion ſeems plauſible, as it may be preſumed, that an author's reaſon for not publiſhing his works, is a conſciouſneſs of their inferiority. The Sermons of Dr. Jortin were however deſigned, by their author, as a legacy to mankind. To enlarge on their value, would only be to echo back the public voice. Good ſenſe and ſound morality appear in them, not indeed dreſſed out in the meretricious ornaments of a florid ſtyle, but in all the manly force, and ſimple graces, of natural eloquence. The ſame caprice, which raiſes to reputation thoſe trifling diſcourſes which have nothing to recommend them but a prettineſs of fancy, will again conſign them to oblivion: but the Sermons of Dr. Jortin will continue to be read with pleaſure and edification, as long as human nature ſhall continue to be endowed with the faculties of reaſon and diſcernment.

The tranſition from an author's writings to his life, is frequently diſadvantageous to his character. Dr. Jortin, however, when

when no longer conſidered as an author, but as a man, is ſo far from being leſſened in our opinion, that he excites ſtill greater eſteem and applauſe. A ſimplicity of manners, an inoffenſive behaviour, an univerſal benevolence, candour, modeſty, and good ſenſe, were his characteriſtics. Though his genius, and love of letters, led him to chooſe the ſtill vale of ſequeſtered life, yet was his merit conſpicuous enough to attract the notice of a certain Primate, who did honour to epiſcopacy. Unknown by perſonal acquaintance, and unrecommended by the ſolicitation of friends, or the interpoſition of power, he was preſented, by Archbiſhop Herring, to a valuable benefice in London, as a reward for his exertions as a ſcholar and a divine. Some time after, he became chaplain to a late Biſhop of London, who gave him the Vicarage of Kenſington, and appointed him Archdeacon of his Dioceſe. This was all the preferment he had, nor had he this till he was advanced in life. He did not however repine. Thus he ſpeaks of himſelf.

ſelf. "Not to his erudition—but to "his conſtant love and purſuit of it— "he owes a ſituation and a ſtation, bet- "ter than he expected, and as good as "he ought to deſire."

While perſons of inferior attainments were made biſhops, a man who had been uncommonly eminent in the ſervice of learning and religion, was left to pine in the ſhade of obſcurity. Many who were thought to have little more than the ſhadow of piety and learning, have had the ſubſtantial reward of them, if ſecular advantages could beſtow it. Jortin was acknowledged to poſſeſs true virtue and real knowledge, but was left to receive his recompence in the ſuggeſtions of a good conſcience, and the applauſe of poſterity*.

* The writer of this eulogium, as it has been called, is not conſcious of exaggeration. He owns, however, that he entertained a favourable prepoſſeſſion concerning this liberal and laborious ſcholar at a very early age. When a ſchool-boy he had the honour to be ſeveral times in his company, and always looked up to him with a degree of veneration natural to a young mind ſtrongly attached to letters. He is happy to find that the unprejudiced coincide with him in his maturer judgment.

ESSAY XIX.

ON THE CHARACTER OF ADDISON AS A POET.

THE luſtre of a great name not only ſets off real beauties to the greateſt advantage, but adds a grace to deformity, and converts a defect to an excellence. The enthuſiaſtical admirers of a favourite author, like ardent lovers, view thoſe objects with rapture, which cauſe in others indifference or diſguſt. Without conſidering the inequalities of the ſame genius, and the diverſities of ſubjects, they are led to conclude from the excellence of one part of an author's works, that all are excellent; and that whatever bears his ſignature is genuine wit, true taſte, and ſound learning.

I know not whether even Mr. Addiſon, who is ſo deſervedly eſteemed the honour of

of our nation, was not indebted for a ſmall part of his reputation to the blind bigotry of prejudice. On any other ſuppoſition, I know not how he could have been admired as a very eminent poet. The frigidity of temper, which conſtituted a ſolid judgment, and qualified him for the cool diſquiſitions of criticiſm and morality, rendered him incapable of that animated ſpirit which is the ſoul of poetry. But the reader is unwilling to believe, that ſo accurate a critic, and ſo correct a writer, is himſelf faulty; and, therefore, when he paſſes from his proſe to his poetry, and obſerves a manifeſt inferiority and deficiency of merit in the latter, he rather inclines to diſtruſt his own judgment than the abilities of the author. Reader after reader has toiled through the ſame dull rhimes, perhaps blind to their faults, or if ſenſible of their defects, yet loud in their praiſe, which he beſtows in oppoſition to conviction, from a dread of the imputation of a depraved taſte. Had not a veneration for his name prevented critics from ſpeaking their real ſentiments,

ſentiments, though Addiſon would, as a moral eſſayiſt, moſt juſtly have been called the Socrates, Plato, or Xenophon of his age; yet as a verſifier, he would, perhaps, long ago have ranked among the Mævii and Bavii. A verſe here and there might be ſelected, which would qualify him for a ſeat among the Grub-ſtreet Muſes, and ſome might be found nearly equal to the ſublime compoſitions of a London Bellman.

It would be injuſtice to Mr. Tickell, to paſs over, in ſilence, the elegant poem which he prefixed to the works of Addiſon, on the death of their author. The melancholy flow of the verſe is well adapted to expreſs the tenderneſs of the ſentiments. The beauty of the imagery, and the energy of the expreſſion, entitle this little piece to a very reſpectable rank among the elegiac compoſitions of the Engliſh writers. It was for a long time little regarded, but the attention lately paid to it, and the commendations beſtowed on it, are proofs that literary merit, however unnoticed for a time through accident, preju-

dice,

dice, or party, is ſure to receive the applauſe it deſerves from impartial poſterity.

At the end of the verſes of Addiſon to Mr. Dryden, we are told, that the author was but twenty-two years of age when he wrote them. Whether the age was affixed to extenuate the imperfections, or to enhance the merits of the poem, certain it is, that both theſe intentions are fruſtrated by its extreme inſignificance and futility. The production is unworthy the age of twenty-two. Mr. Pope is known to have written his Paſtorals, which infinitely exceed the verſification of Addiſon, at ſixteen, and Milton acquired on elegance in Latin verſe, at an earlier period. The thoughts in this piece are not ſtriking, the ſtyle is contemptible, and the negligence in the rhime would alone, in the preſent réfinement of taſte, conſign the work to oblivion.

That all his pieces are upon a level with this, cannot be aſſerted. That ſome of them abound with grand conceptions, and have a few good lines, muſt be confeſſed.

feſſed. But allowing Addiſon all the merit in his poetry, which candour or even partiality in his favour can allow, he never can be juſtly eſteemed one of the firſt poets of the nation. I never heard that Socrates increaſed his fame by his poetical verſion of Æſop's Fables, and the beſt proſe-writer in the beſt age of Rome wrote the line, "O fortunatam "natam, me Conſule, Romam." The truth is, nature uſually beſtows her gifts with a prudent liberality even on her favourites. One might on this occaſion apply Martial's "Hoc Ciceronis habes."

To oppoſe opinions univerſally received, is to incur the imputation of vanity, ignorance, or want of taſte. But as every individual has a right to private judgment, and may offer his ſentiments to others, provided he does it with modeſty, profeſſes a poſſibility of miſtake, and keeps his mind open to conviction, I have ventured to advance a doctrine ſomewhat ſingular; regardleſs how it may alarm thoſe who ſubmit their judgments to the direction of others, and who pay an implicit obedience to authority.

ESSAY XX.

ACCOUNT OF A CLERGYMAN.

FROM AMICUS.

THAT admiration is the effect of ignorance, is a truth univerſally confeſſed; and nothing ſo forcibly excites the wonder of the illiterate, as the character of profound erudition.

Dazzled by the ſplendor of literary honours, many an honeſt parent has prevented his ſon from acquiring a fortune behind the counter, to ſee him ſtarve in a pulpit.

Theſe reflections were occaſioned by meeting an old friend at a coffee-houſe one evening laſt week. His looks were not ſleek and pampered enough to make

me miſtake him for a Canon or a Dean; and he ſufficiently apologized for the ruſtineſs of his coat, by the following narrative:

" My father," ſaid he, after ſome preliminary converſation, " was a ſhoe-maker " of tolerable buſineſs in London; a very " honeſt man, and very much given to " reading godly books, whenever he " could ſteal a moment from the lap- " ſtone and the laſt. As I was the only " child, he took great delight in me, and " uſed frequently to ſay, that he hoped " in time to ſee me Archbiſhop of Can- " terbury, and no ſuch great matters " neither; for as to my parentage, I was " as good as many a one that had worn " a mitre; and he would make me as " good a *ſcholard* too, or it ſhould go " hard with him.

" My deſtination to the church, was " thus unalterably fixed before I was five " years old; and in conſequence of it, " I was put to a grammar-ſchool in the " city, whence, after a thouſand perils " of the cane, and perils of the rod, I

" went to the Univerſity on an exhibi-
" tion of fifteen pounds a year, which
" my father obtained from one of the
" city companies, with no ſmall diffi-
" culty. So ſcanty an allowance would
" by no means defray the enormous ex-
" pences of Univerſity education; and
" my father, whoſe pride would not let
" me appear meaner than my compa-
" nions, very readily agreed to pay me
" forty pounds out of the yearly profits
" of his trade, and to debar himſelf
" many innocent gratifications, in order
" to accompliſh in me the grand object
" of all his ambition.

" In conſequence of my father's de-
" ſire, that I ſhould complete the full
" term of academical education, I did
" not go into Orders till I was of ſeven
" years ſtanding, and had taken the de-
" gree of Maſter of Arts. I was, there-
" fore, incapable of receiving any pecu-
" niary emoluments from my ſtudies, till
" I was ſix and twenty. Then, however,
" I was reſolved to make a bold puſh,
" and to free my father from the burthen

" of ſupporting me with half the profits
" of his labours. The old man was
" eager that I ſhould attempt to get ſome
" kind of preferment; not, as he would
" generouſly ſay, that he wanted to with-
" draw his aſſiſtance, but that he thought
" it was high time to begin to look up
" at the Biſhoprick.

" I haſtened to London as the moſt
" ample field for the diſplay of my abi-
" lities, and the acquiſition of money
" and fame. Soon after my arrival, I
" heard of a vacant Lecture-ſhip, and
" though I was an entire ſtranger to
" every one of the pariſhioners, I re-
" ſolved to truſt my cauſe to honeſt en-
" deavours, and a ſedulous canvaſs. I
" ſhall not trouble you with an enumera-
" tion of the ſeveral indignities I ſuf-
" fered (for I had not loſt my Univer-
" ſity pride) from being under the ne-
" ceſſity to addreſs, with the moſt ab-
" ject ſupplication, chandlers, barbers,
" and green-grocers. Suffice it to ac-
" quaint you, that myſelf, and another
" young Clergyman of regular educa-
" tion,

" tion, appeared, on the day of election,
" to have but ſeventeen votes between
" us; and that a methodiſtical enthuſiaſt,
" who had once been a carpenter, bore
" away the prize, with a majority of a
" hundred and twenty.

" Though diſappointed, I was not deject-
" ed; and I applied to a certain Rector
" for his Curacy, the duty of which,
" conſiſted in no more than prayers
" twice a day, a ſermon on Sundays,
" and innumerable burials, chriſtenings,
" and weddings. I thought myſelf hap-
" py, however, in being offered forty
" guineas a year, without ſurplus, or
" ſurplice fees; but how was I cha-
" grined, on being told by the Rector,
" on the very firſt Sunday I went to
" officiate, that I need not trouble my-
" ſelf, as another gentleman had un-
" dertaken the whole duty at forty
" pounds!

" I waited now a conſiderable time in
" expectation of ſomething to fall, but
" heard of nothing in which there was
" the leaſt probability of ſucceſs, unſup-

" ported, as I was, by friends, and un-
" known to fame. At laſt I was in-
" formed by an acquaintance, that a
" certain Clergyman, in the city, was
" about to reſign his Lectureſhip, and
" that he would probably reſign in my
" favour, if I were early enough in my
" application. I made all the haſte I
" poſſibly could to reach this gentleman
" before his reſignation; and found very
" little difficulty in perſuading him to
" intercede in my favour. In ſhort, his
" endeavours, joined to my own, ſecured
" the Lectureſhip, and I was unani-
" mouſly choſen. The electors, how-
" ever, expreſſed a deſire, that I would
" quit my place of reſidence, which was
" a long way off, and live in the pariſh.
" To this requeſt I conſented, and im-
" mediately fixed myſelf in a decent fa-
" mily, where I lodged and boarded for
" fifty pounds a year; and as I was not
" ſo ambitious as my father, I congra-
" tulated myſelf on the happy event,
" and ſat down contented and ſatisfied.
" But, alas! how was I confounded,
" when

" when my collectors brought the an-
" nual contribution, to find it amount
" to no more than an exact ſum of
" twenty-one pounds two ſhillings and
" three-pence three-farthings! I was un-
" der an immediate neceſſity of diſchar-
" ging my lodging, reſigning my pre-
" ferment, and quietly decamping with
" the loſs of a conſiderable number of
" ſolid pieces.

" Thus, Sir," ſaid he, " have I now
" for theſe laſt twenty years been toſſed
" about in the world, without any fixed
" reſidence, and without any certain
" proſpect of my bread. I muſt not
" however complain, as I am well aſſured
" there are hundreds in the metropolis
" in ſituations exactly ſimilar to mine.
" Yet ſometimes, I own, I cannot help
" being fooliſh enough to imagine, that
" I might, perhaps, have been happier,
" and I am ſure I could have been
" richer, had I been brought up to my
" paternal awl and laſt. My poor father
" died about two years ago, and I have
" reaſon to think, his diſappointment

" and ſorrow for my ill-ſucceſs, haſtened " his diſſolution.

" I now ſupport myſelf tolerably well " in the capacity of, what the world " ludicrouſly calls, a Hackney Parſon. " And though I do not get quite ſo " much as a journeyman ſhoe-maker, " I make ſhift to keep ſoul and body " together; and I thank God for that. " If, Sir, you could recommend me to " a half crown job, here is my addreſs, " up four pair of ſtairs"——

He was going to give me a direction to him, when I was obliged to get up in order to conceal a tear that ſtruggled to flow down my cheek. I turned, however, round to him again, and privately ſlipping an inconſiderable preſent into his hand, took my leave of him, not without ſevere reflections on thoſe parents, who, to indulge a childiſh vanity, bring up their offspring to miſery and want.

ESSAY XXI.

REMARKS ON SOME OF THE MINOR GREEK POETS.

THE intrinſic graces of the claſſic writers have charmed every mind which was ſuſceptible of the beauties of ſpirit, taſte, and elegance. Since the revival of learning, innumerable critics have employed themſelves in diſplaying the beauties which they felt, or in removing the difficulties and obſtructions which retarded their progreſs in the peruſal of the antients. At preſent, there is ſcarce any room for criticiſm: and the moſt laborious Commentator finds, with regret, his profoundeſt reſearches, and his acuteſt remarks, anticipated by the lucubrations of former critics: but as there is ſcarcely a greater difference between the features of the face, than between

tween the faculties of the mind in different men, and as objects muſt ſtrike various feelings in various manners, the works of taſte and genius may, on different reviews, furniſh inexhauſtible matter for critical obſervation. Upon this principle, authors, of the preſent age, venture to add to the labours of their predeceſſors, without fearing or incurring the imputation of vanity or impertinence.

The preſent remarks will be confined to ſome of the Greek Minor Poets, without minutely attending to chronological or any other order.

In the union of dignity with ſweetneſs, of melody with ſtrength, the Greek is better adapted to beautiful compoſition, than any modern language. The Italian has all its ſoftneſs, but wants its force. The French poſſeſſes elegance and expreſſion, but is deficient in ſound and dignity. The Engliſh is ſtrong, nervous, flowery, fit for animated oratory and enthuſiaſtic poetry, but abounds with Saxon monoſyllables, ill-adapted

to

to expreſs the muſic of mellifluous cadence. To compare the Dutch and the German with the language of Athens, were to compare the jarring noiſe of grating iron, with the ſoft warblings of the flute. The other languages of Europe are equally unfit for harmonious modulation, and indeed cannot properly be examined in this place, as the people, who ſpeak them, have not yet diſtinguiſhed themſelves by any writings truly claſſical.

The Greek Epigram naturally falls firſt under our preſent conſideration. Of theſe little compoſitions, which owe their origin to Greece, none can be inſenſible of the beauty, whoſe taſte is not vitiated by the leſs delicate wit of the modern Epigrammatiſt. Indeed, to reliſh the ſimple graces of the Greek Epigram, the taſte muſt not be formed upon the model even of the celebrated Martial. Among the Latin poets, Catullus approaches neareſt to the Greeks in this ſpecies of compoſition.

The Anthologiæ, ſtill extant, are written by various authors, and there are ſcarcely

ſcarcely ſufficient Epigrams of any one, to diſcriminate his manner from that of others. Suffice it to remark in general, that their beauty does not often conſiſt in a point, or witty conceit, but in a ſimplicity of thought, and a ſweetneſs of language.

The golden verſes of Pythagoras, though not remarkable for ſplendor of diction, or flowing verſification, are yet highly beautiful in the conciſe and forcible mode of inculcating morality, and almoſt the Chriſtian virtues. The earlier philoſophers of Greece conveyed their tenets in verſe, not ſo much becauſe they aſpired to the character of poets, as becauſe precepts, delivered in metre, were more eaſily retained in the memory of their diſciples. Pythagoras has compriſed every neceſſary rule for the conduct of life in this little poem, and he that commits it to memory, will not want a guide to direct his behaviour under any event: but though the morality of theſe verſes is their more valuable beauty, yet

are

are they by no means deſtitute of poetical merit.

That generoſity of ſoul, which ever accompanies true genius, has induced the poets and philoſophers, of all ages, to ſtand forth in the cauſe of liberty. Alcæus, of whoſe merits from the monuments of antiquity we may form the moſt exalted idea, firſt raiſed himſelf to eminence by a poem, intituled Staſiotica, a violent invective againſt Pittacus, at that time the tyrant of Athens. It has not eſcaped the general wreck, and we have only a few broken ſpecimens of this celebrated writer's works preſerved by the antient grammarians. We muſt, therefore, be contented to learn his character from the judicious Quintilian, and the learned Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus: the former of whom aſſerts, that he was conciſe, ſublime, accurate, and in many reſpects reſembled Homer; the latter, that he had a grandeur, brevity, and ſweetneſs, equally blended through all his compoſitions.

Steſichorus

Steſichorus, according to Quintilian, was remarkable for ſtrength of genius. He gave to lyric poetry, all the ſolemnity of the Epopœa. Had he known how to reſtrain the impetuoſity of his genius, it is ſaid, he would have rivalled Homer: but unfortunately, the noble warmth of his temper urged him beyond the bounds of juſt writing, and he ſeems to have failed of excellence by a redundancy of beauties.

The fragments of Menander are ſufficiently excellent to induce every votary of learning to regret the loſs of his works. Some indeed have thought, that time never gave a greater blow to polite literature, than in the deſtruction of the Comedies of Menander: but as Terence has preſerved his ſpirit and his ſtyle, perhaps we are compenſated for the want of the original, by the exact copyings of that elegant author. Quintilian, from whoſe judgment there is no appeal, has repreſented Menander as alone ſufficient to form our taſte and ſtyle. The few remains, preſerved by Stobæus, whether the beauty

of

of the ſentiments, or the purity of the diction be regarded, muſt be pronounced uncommonly excellent. They are, however, too generally known to require illuſtration.

Simonides is characterized by Longinus, as a poet remarkable for the pathetic. Of his writings, very few have ſurvived the injuries of time. The little poem on Danäe, is, however, ſufficient to juſtify the judgment of Longinus. Nothing can be more delicately tender, or more exquiſitely pathetic. There is ſomething inexpreſſibly pleaſing to the mind, in the repreſentation of a mother addreſſing a ſleeping infant unconſcious of its danger, with all the endearing blandiſhments of maternal fondneſs.

The other remarkable poem of this author, which time has ſpared, is of a very different kind. It is a ſatire on Women, and is well known by a proſaic tranſlation of it, inſerted in the Eſſays of a celebrated modern writer.

Alcmon of Laconia is another melancholy inſtance of the depredations which the

the hand of time has made on the moſt valuable works of antiquity. Of this author, once celebrated throughout Greece, quoted by the learned, and repeated by the fair, ſcarcely the name is known in the preſent age. Athenæus, Hephæſtion, the ſcholiaſt on Pindar, Euſtathius, and Plutarch, have vindicated him from abſolute oblivion, by preſerving a few of his fragments. Love verſes, which ſince his time have employed ſome of the greateſt writers, and have been admired by the moſt ſenſible readers, were of his invention. All who preceded him had invariably written in Hexameter. He ſubjoined the elegiac verſe, and may juſtly claim the honour of having invented that ſpecies of poetry, which Ovid and the other Latin elegiac Writers have ſince advanced to a moſt pleaſing ſpecies of compoſition.

Archilochus wrote iambics and elegiacs; the former, ſatirical; the latter, amatorial. That he ſucceeded in his attempts, we have ſufficient reaſon to conclude from the teſtimonies of the greateſt critics of antiquity, Horace and

Longinus. There is not enough of him remaining, to enable us to form a judgment of the impartiality of their deciſion, and we muſt be contented to acquieſce in their authority.

Lucian ſays, in one of his Dialogues, that the poets have given Jupiter many of his moſt pompous epithets, merely for the ſake of a ſonorous word to fill up a verſe. The hymns of Orpheus abound with theſe expletives, and the reader is often diſguſted with ſounding verſe almoſt deſtitute of ſenſe. If, however, they were compoſed for muſic, they may paſs uncenſured: for it ſeems to have been generally and moſt abſurdly agreed, and it is obſervable at this day, that very little attention is to be paid to the words of Operas, Odes, and Songs, which are written merely for muſic. The poems of Orpheus, if thoſe which are extant are like all his productions, would certainly move no ſtones. What has been ſaid of the hymns of this poet, may be extended to many other Greek compoſitions of the ſame ſpecies. General cenſure will,

however, ſeldom be juſt, and it muſt be confeſſed, that there are ſome among them, particularly thoſe of Callimachus, truely ſublime and beautiful.

There was a ſpecies of poetry among the Athenians, which, in ſome meaſure, reſembled many of our Engliſh ballads. At the approach of a war, or after a victory or defeat, the poets and ſtateſmen uſually diſperſed among the people ſome ſhort compoſition, which tended to animate them with courage, or to inſpire them with joy. Solon, the wiſe legiſlator of Athens, was too well acquainted with the power of poetry over the human heart, to neglect this efficacious method of enforcing his laws, and propagating his inſtitutions among the lower ranks of the Athenians. There are ſtill extant ſome of his pieces, which bear internal marks of having been purpoſely written to give the people a paſſion for liberty, to inſpire them with a love of virtue, and to teach them obedience to the laws. They are, indeed, written in the elegiac meaſure, but have nothing of the ſoft amorous

amorous ſtrain which diſtinguiſhes the Ovidian elegy. They are manly, moral, and ſevere. By theſe, it is a well known fact, the Athenians were animated to reſume a war which they had dropt in deſpair; and in conſequence of the ardour which theſe inſpired, they obtained a complete victory over their enemies.

Tyrtæus wrote in a ſimilar ſtyle, but entirely confined himſelf to martial ſubjects. So ſtrongly is military valour, and the love of liberty enforced in his little compoſitions, that it would by no means be abſurd to attribute the victories of the Grecians over the Perſians, as much to a Tyrtæus, as to a Miltiades or Themiſtocles. The effects of ſuch political ballads have been frequently ſeen among the Engliſh in a time of a war. Many a poor fellow has been tempted to quit the plough and the loom for the ſword, on hearing a ſong in praiſe of Hawke or Wolfe roared by his obſtreperous companions. Theſe verſes are too deficient in point of elegance to admit of quotations, and the frequent op-

portunities of hearing them from the mouths of the vulgar, render repetition in this place unneceſſary. The bards of Grub-ſtreet are commonly the authors of our martial ballads; but at Athens they were written by poets, ſtateſmen, and philoſophers. We may judge of the influence of their productions, by the powerful effect of our rude and even nonſenſical rhymes.

Few antient authors have been leſs read than Lycophron. His obſcurity not only retards, but diſguſts the reader; yet, perhaps, his want of perſpicuity, though highly diſagreeable to the ſtudent, is a beauty in a work conſiſting of predictions. Prophecies and oracles have ever been purpoſely obſcure, and almoſt unintelligible. The mind that attends to theſe uninſpired predictions of paganiſm, voluntarily renounces reaſon, and believes the more as it underſtands the leſs; but whether Lycophron is to be praiſed or cenſured for obſcurity, certain it is, that on this account he will never become a favourite author. Notwithſtanding the labours of the

the great Potter, he is ſtill difficult, and will probably continue to repoſe in duſt and darkneſs, amidſt the dull collections of antiquated muſeums.

The poems of Bacchylides, however he is neglected by the moderns, were highly honoured by an antient, who was eſteemed a compleat judge of literary merit. Hiero heſitated not to pronounce them ſuperior to the Odes of Pindar, which have been generally celebrated as the utmoſt efforts of human genius. The opinion of Hiero may, however, be queſtioned with an appearance of plauſibility, when it is conſidered, that his character, as a critic, was eſtabliſhed by his courtiers, who, to gain his favour, might not ſcruple to violate the truth.

The gay, the ſprightly, the voluptuous Anacreon is known to every reader. His ſubjects, and his manner of treating them, have captivated all who are ſuſceptible either of pleaſure or of poetry. There is, indeed, an exquiſite tenderneſs, delicacy, and taſte in the ſentiments, but I have always thought he derived no

ſmall ſhare of his beauty from the choice of expreſſions, and the peculiar harmony of his verſes. It has been objected to him by rigid moraliſts, that his writings tend to promote drunkenneſs and debauchery. But this objection might in ſome degree be extended to a great part of the fineſt writers ancient and modern. A man of ſenſe and judgment will admire the beauties of a compoſition, without ſuffering its ſentiments to influence his principles or his conduct. He will look upon the more licentious ſallies of Anacreontic writers, as little *jeux d'eſprit* deſigned to pleaſe in the hour of convivial feſtivity, but not to regulate his thoughts and actions in the ſerious concerns of life. Whatever may be the moral tendency of his writings, it is certain that as a poet he is unrivalled in that ſpecies of compoſition which he adopted. Many have been the imitations of him, but few have ſucceeded. The joys of love and wine have indeed been deſcribed by his followers, but their touches are more like the dawbings of an unſkilful painter, than the exquiſite

quiſite traits of a maſter hand. Cowley, whoſe genius certainly partook more of the Anacreontic than of the Pindaric, has been one of his happieſt imitators, for he is rather to be called an imitator than a tranſlator: but the Engliſh reader will not form a juſt idea of the merits of Anacreon, from thoſe Bacchanalian ſongs which ſo frequently appear under the title of Anacreontic.

The paſſion of love was never more ſtrongly felt or deſcribed than by the ſenſible Sappho. The little Greek ode, preſerved by Longinus, the metre of which derives its name from her, has been tranſlated by Mr. Phillips with all the air of an original. The Latin tranſlation of Catullus appears much inferior to that of our countryman. The Greek indeed is much corrupted, and, as it now ſtands, is leſs pleaſing than the Engliſh. Every one, who on reading it recollects its occaſion, muſt lament that ſo warm a paſſion, ſo feelingly repreſented, was excited by an improper object.

Scaliger, whoſe judgment, though ſometimes called in queſtion, ought certainly to have great weight, beſtowed very extraordinary praiſes on the writings of Oppian; a poet, who, though he has been compared to Virgil in his Georgics, is only peruſed by the curious in Grecian literature, and is known only by name to the common reader. The emperor Caracalla, under whom he flouriſhed, is ſaid to have been ſo charmed with his poems, as to have ordered him a ſtater for each verſe. Modern critics will, however, dare to call in queſtion the taſte of Caracalla. The works of Oppian conſiſted of halieutics, cynogetics, and ixeutics, the latter of which have periſhed by the injuries of time. He was a grammarian, which, in the idea of the Greeks, meant a profeſſed ſcholar; and in every age, the works of men, who profeſſed literature, have been leſs admired than the vigorous and wild productions of uncultivated genius. The former are contented to avoid faults, but genius labours after beauties only.

Apollonius is more correct than Homer, and Johnſon than Shakeſpeare; but Apollonius and Johnſon are coldly approved, while Homer and Shakeſpeare are beheld with aſtoniſhment almoſt equal to idolatry. It ſhould however be remarked to the honour of Apollonius, that the judicious Virgil borrowed ſeveral of his moſt celebrated ſimilies from him, and perhaps he is not to be ranked among the poetæ minores. Oppian has met with the uſual fate of grammarians, and has ſcarcely been read; but the reader of taſte will yet find many paſſages, which, if they are not ſublime, he muſt confeſs to be beautiful.

Tryphiodorus has been introduced to the Engliſh reader, by the excellent tranſlation of the ingenious Mr. Merrick. Homer he certainly imitated, and has ſucceeded in the imitation. Copies taken by great maſters, though inferior in general, yet in ſome parts commonly rival their originals. Tryphiodorus reaches not the ſublimer flights of the Mæonian bard, but he ſometimes follows his leſs daring

daring excurſions at no diſtant interval. It is enough to recommend him to general approbation, that with a moderate portion of Homer's fire, he has more correctneſs. He may be read with advantage not only in a poetical, but in an hiſtorical view. Where Homer diſcontinued the thread of his ſtory, Tryphiodorus has taken it up. Indeed this poem is a neceſſary ſupplement to the Iliad, without which the reader is left unſatisfied. Tryphiodorus is ſaid to have written another poem, called Ὀδυσσεια λειπογραμματη, in which he has omitted, through each book, the letter which marked the number of it. Such a kind of compoſition is trifling, and beneath a man of genius; but it muſt be allowed to be a work of great difficulty, and conſequently a proof of great application. Nor ought it to injure the character of Tryphiodorus as a poet, but to be viewed as the wanton production of an ingenious, but ill-employed grammarian. If Homer wrote the battle of the Frogs and Mice, and Virgil

deſcanted

deſcanted on his Gnat, without loſing the dignity of their characters; inferior writers may indulge the inoffenſive ſallies of whim, without the imputation of folly or puerility.

In the peruſal of ſome of theſe, and other of the Minor Poets, whoſe works are extant, the lover of the Grecian Muſe finds a pleaſing variety, after reading the more ſublime and beautiful productions of Heſiod, Homer, and Theocritus; and every one, who has juſt pretenſions to taſte, muſt ſubſcribe to the opinion of Horace,

Non ſi priores Mæonius tenet
Sedes Homerus, Pindaricæ latent,
Ceæque et Alcæi minaces,
Steſichorique graves Camenæ.

Nec ſi quid olim luſit Anacreon
Delevit ætas; ſpirat adhuc amor
Vivuntque commiſſi calores
Æoliæ fidibus puellæ.

ESSAY XXII.

HISTORY OF PHILEDONES.

THE moraliſts of every age agree in this point, that example is more forcible than precept. To which may be added, that in the ſame degree in which example exceeds precept, experience is ſuperior to example.

After all the lucubrations of philoſophers, the menaces of legiſlators, and the exhortations of divines, the world ſtill abounds with inſtances of the ill effects of miſconduct, ſo numerous and ſtriking as to force attention. But if precept or example could have reformed mankind, we ſhould by this time only read of the fatal vices of ambition, of envy, of avarice, or of luſt, in the obſolete invective of ſome ſplenetic ſatiriſt. We ſtill, however, ſee the votary of pleaſure tread the path which

which led his companion to pain aud ignominy: we ſtill ſee the brow wrinkled with the toils of acquiring wealth, the eye clouded with malice at the view of ſuperiority, and the heart palpitating after thoſe honours and diſtinctions, which drew upon the former poſſeſſor, envy and ſolicitude.

The hardy votaries of the more manly vices, ambition, avarice or envy, are not to be reclaimed even by feeling the inconveniences of their purſuits. The miſer, it is true, does not participate the joys of ſocial converſe, nor taſte the feaſt of luxury, nor recline in the ſoftneſs of indolence; but he rejoices in a favourable change in the price of ſtocks, and learns to forget the abſence of real enjoyment. Hope leads on the ambitious, and teaches him to ſmile at miſcarriages and diſappointments: and even the envious may, at the ſight of the ill-fortune of another, ſometimes feel delight. Thus even experience of the evils attending their ſeveral vices, does not incline the more inveterate ſlaves of paſſion to a reformation, be-

cauſe

cauſe there ſtill remains ſome fancied equivalent happineſs to compenſate the want of the common ſatisfactions of life, which their purſuits exclude. With theſe, neither precept, nor example, nor experience, operate.

There are however ſome, who, though blind to precept and example, may yet, with proper attention to themſelves, be reſtored to eaſe and happineſs by perſonal experience. Theſe are the gay race of mortals, who flutter in the regions of pleaſure, ranſack every roſe in ſearch of honey, and live but to be delighted. Theſe halcyon beings are commonly youthful, and the ſame flow of ſpirits which renders them deaf to inſtruction, and blind to example, occaſions a finer ſenſibility of the evils of experience. To theſe, it may not be a loſt labour to addreſs an admonition, that they would ſtop their career, when they perceive they have loſt the road; and that they would at laſt turn to the right path, when they have felt the miſeries of their miſtake.

From

From the reſtraint of ſcholaſtic diſcipline, and the honeſt emulation of a ſchool-boy, Philedones entered into a ſtate of idleneſs and diſſipation in one of our univerſities. On his firſt aſſociation with the younger members of his ſociety, he could not but obſerve, that he was received with an univerſal ſneer of contempt. His penetration was too acute to remain long ignorant of the cauſe of his inſignificancy. A head adorned with nothing but what nature had given, a few lank locks of hair, and a coat with ſkirts full two inches longer than the το πρεπον, the faſhion of the times, had rendered him an object of ridicule. As he had too much ſagacity not to diſcover his defect, ſo had he too much ſpirit not to apply an immediate remedy. The moſt faſhionable taylor is ſought for. A ſuit prepared with the niceſt art. The abilities of the dapper tonſor are exerted on his head. He is completely equipped. His heart glows, and he haſtens to his companions. Elevated with the agreeable reception he meets with, he reſolves

to aſpire to the exalted character of a leader of *Bon Ton* among his brother academics.

In proportion as he grew fonder of his gay companions, it was obſervable the leſs time he dedicated to cultivating an acquaintance with his old friends in leathern coats. The Mæonian was diſcarded for a ſcheme of pleaſure, and the predicaments of the Stagirite poſtponed for a chearful glaſs.

Hitherto he retained ſo much of the ſchool-boy as to be content with diverſions, which, though trifling, were not vicious. As his connections increaſed, his views enlarged: and he diſcovered, that in order to complete the man, it was neceſſary to be diſtinguiſhed, by ſome exploit, above the abilities of a puling ſchool-boy. Without the inſtigation of paſſion, he became a debauchee; and without the love of wine, a drunkard.

At length he appeared in a new character. The innocent gaiety of natural chearfulneſs was now to be ſupplied by a forced ſmile, and a conſtrained levity.

Sorry

Sorry for his conduct, he had not fortitude to amend it. Reluctant, he returns to pleaſures he deteſts, and plunges into vice to drown ſenſibility.

This was the important criſis at which a retreat was practicable. Experience had ſhewn him enough of vice to make him abhor, and habit had not ſo cloſely chained him as to render him unable to forſake it.

Philedones, by a frequent repetition of his more licentious pleaſures, began to loſe that diffidence which commonly attends a novice in the ways of vice. He could not help wondering at his own childiſhneſs, when he called to mind his late fears and uneaſineſs. He was ſtill farther confirmed by the careleſs jollity of his comrades, moſt of whom, being much older than himſelf, had long forgotten the bluſh of modeſty, and the fears of innocence. Our Hero could not brook ſuperiority of any kind. He ſoon equalled the firſt men of his ſociety, in all the accompliſhments of conſummate libertiniſm. Sometimes the body yields before the mind: Philedones was ſeized with a fever, and pronounced to be at the point of death.

It is a true remark, that we are never ſo good as when we lie on the bed of ſickneſs. Philedones with a frequent ſigh declared the vanity of pleaſure, lamented the folly of youth, and reſolved, if heaven ſhould permit him to recover from diſeaſe, to be a zealot in the cauſe of virtue. The phyſicians gave hopes, and in a few weeks Philedones was well.

Here was another opportunity of returning to the calm and innocent life of a man of letters, his original deſtination. The paſſions were aſleep, the force of habit had been overpowered, and every allurement was at a diſtance. Philedones embraced the happy minute, felt himſelf glow with a ſenſe of his own amendment, and in ſhort was happy.

He was no ſooner reſtored to health and vigour, than his acquaintance flocked around him with compliments of congratulation. Philedones, at firſt, received them with all the coldneſs of a man, who attributed all his errors to their encouragement and example. The want of his uſual frankneſs of ſalutation, they attributed

buted to the imbecillity of a recent indiſpoſition. They repeated their viſits; Philedones regained his ſpirits, and eagerly returned to his forſaken friends.

And now he was completely armed againſt every attack of inward remorſe, and every reproof of the friends of virtue. The vices he had hitherto indulged himſelf in, appeared trifling and deſpicable: but his genius, however comprehenſive, ſoon found ſufficient buſineſs and entertainment at the gaming-table. The rapid ſucceſſion of hope and fear gave ſuch exerciſe to his mind, that in a ceſſation from the dice-box, he found life inſipid and unſupportable. The bottle is a conſtant reſource to that part of mankind, who ſtudy the various arts of loſing time, the moſt valuable of all poſſeſſions. The whole employment of Philedones now conſiſted in ſhaking the dice, and filling the glaſs. The former, as he was unſucceſsful, impaired his fortune; the latter, his conſtitution.

To recount the various viciſſitudes of ſucceſs, of elation and depreſſion, would

be an endleſs taſk. Suffice it to ſay, that he played away a competent eſtate, which might have afforded a ſweet retreat in a peaceful old age; that he ruined a conſtitution which might have rendered him happy in himſelf and uſeful to others; that he lived a wretch, and died unlamented.

ESSAY XXIII.

ILL EFFECTS OF READING WITHOUT DIGESTING.

AN analogy between the powers of the body and faculties of the mind is obvious in many inſtances. The eye cannot ſurvey a great ſpace with the ſame accuracy with which it views a ſingle object at a nearer diſtance. It takes in the coarſer parts indeed, but comprehends not the more minute, though not leſs beautiful appearances. Thus too the mind, when attentive to every part of knowledge, ſeldom attains to perfection in any ſingle ſcience: and daily experience evinces, that the Helluo Librorum, the great reader or devourer of books, who is more ſtudious of quantity than quality, and is led on by the love of novelty rather than of excellence, is rarely learned in an eminent degree.

Adages are commonly true, becauſe founded on experience; "The rolling-

" ſtone gathers no moſs," ſays the Engliſh proverb. To carry on the alluſion, one may add, that while the rolling-ſtone is traverſing the whole garden, the ſpade, in the ſpace of a few yards, may gather the valuable produce of a year.

Pliny the younger, who is no leſs remarkable for the juſtneſs of his ſentiments than for his elegant manner of expreſſing them, has given a hint on this ſubject, which, though comprized in few words, may be more inſtructive than volumes of advice. After ſome remarks on curſory and ſuperficial reading, he ſays, We ſhould be content with few books, and ſtudy them perfectly. We ſhould read, ſays he, " *non multa ſed multum.*" The epigrammatic turn of the words fixes the precept ſtronger on the mind, and renders it more eaſy to be retained in the memory.

The powers of the human mind are not ſtrong enough to acquire knowledge by intuition. This rapid mode of learning truth, is reſerved for beings of a ſuperior order. To gain a complete knowledge of a ſubject in all its parts, it muſt be frequently reviewed,

reviewed, and examined in every light; a proceſs which requires time, labour, and attention; none of which will be in his power, who haſtily paſſes from ſcience to ſcience, with too much volatility to admit thought and recollection.

It frequently happens, that men of great natural parts are excelled by others, whoſe talents are originally inferior. Nor is this to be attributed to any other cauſe, but to that patience of labour, which is frequently the concomitant of dullneſs, and which proves an ample compenſation for the want of vivacity. A man of ſlow underſtanding can ſtoop to inveſtigate obſcurity ſtep by ſtep, till he brings light from darkneſs; can combat difficulties ſeemingly unſurmountable; can repeat the ſame labour without fatigue, and review the ſame ideas without ſatiety; but the volatility of genius affects to paſs over every thing diſguſtful, and willingly neglects thoſe ſubjects which it cannot ſee through at a glance. The fable of the Tortoiſe and the Hare is too obviouſly applicable to the preſent ſubject to admit

mit quotation. Could genius check that precipitation, which precludes accurate enquiry and perfect views, it might ſurely at any time be capable of enlarging the boundaries of human knowledge, and of deriving to itſelf all the light of which the mind is ſuſceptible; ſince it is a known truth, that hardly any difficulty is inſurmountable even to induſtrious ſtupidity.

Patiens, when at ſchool, was not remarkable for the brightneſs of his parts, or the ſenſibility of his temper. The compoſitions which he was obliged to bring as exerciſes, were not lively, elegant, or florid, but then they were ſeldom deficient in orthography, or grammar. He never diſliked the labour of ſeeking the words he was unacquainted with in his lexicon: and though he did not comprehend the full meaning and ſpirit of the author he read, he could tell the Engliſh of every word in his leſſon, and trace it through all its grammatical variations. In ſhort he underwent every kind of literary labour without wearineſs or diſcontent.

content. After all the neceſſary forms of education, he at length entered into the profeſſion of the law.

Velox, one of the contemporaries of Patiens, was fond of learning and deſirous of excelling in it: but as he was of a quick apprehenſion, he was capable of conſtruing a paſſage at one view, which would coſt Patiens an hour's application. He, therefore, never read his leſſon over twice, but diverted his fancy with the peruſal of light, modern publications, ſeveral volumes of which he would frequently devour in a day. Great hopes were entertained of the future eminence of ſo lively a genius. He went to the Univerſity, flattered by his friends, and elate with confidence in his own powers: but it ſoon appeared, that he who ſubmitted to ſo little labour while under authority, entirely relinquiſhed ſtudy when at his own diſpoſal. Plato, Ariſtotle, and Epictetus, remained untouched on his ſhelves; but the works of Fielding, Richardſon, Smollet, together with thoſe of every modern dramatic writer, were conſtantly

ſtantly on his table. If at any time he deigned to caſt an eye over Coke upon Littleton, it was with the ſame levity and precipitation with which he read a monthly magazine. When at laſt he was called to the bar, and the time was come when he was to make his way to eminence by dint of merit, he found himſelf as much a ſtranger to the laws of England, as an inhabitant of Otaheite. Chagrined by diſappointment, and weary of learning, which he had never rationally purſued, he gave up all thoughts of riſing in the world, and retired to a ſmall eſtate in the country, where he lived and died an honeſt ſportſman.

Patiens in the mean time, though he did not reach the top of his profeſſion, yet, from his known integrity and abilities as a counſellor, he was always ſupplied with a number of briefs, by which he acquired an affluent fortune, and lived univerſally reſpected as a man of untainted honour, ſtrong ſenſe, and profound learning.

ESSAY XXIV.

MEN OF GENIUS DO NOT ALWAYS EXCEL IN CONVERSATION.

To ÆMILIUS.

WHEN you were with me laſt, I remember you expreſſed your ſurpriſe, that Varus, who has indubitable marks of true genius in his writings, appeared utterly deſtitute of ſpirit and vivacity in converſation. You ſeemed at a loſs to account for the dullneſs of a man, whoſe pages are replete with wit and humour; and you were aſtoniſhed to find, that he who had engaged in the deepeſt diſquiſitions with all the ſubtilty of argument, was unable to ſupport a trifling converſation on the common topics of the day. You did not perhaps recollect, that great minds can exert themſelves only on great occaſions. Either from pride,

pride, diſuſe, or natural inability, poets and philoſophers are known to appear inferior in the arts of converſation, and the little decencies of common life, to the illiterate beau, and the ſuperficial female.

It has been ſaid, you know, that they who are employed in ſublime ſpeculations, learn to deſpiſe every ſubordinate object as unworthy their regard or cultivation. Where this is really the caſe, it is eaſy to account for the aukwardneſs of men of wit and letters; for it is impoſſible to beſtow pains in the acquiſition of what we contemn: but your own, as well as my experience, will furniſh inſtances of thoſe who have thought it a misfortune not to be able to ſhine at the tea-table as well as in the ſchools. Scaurus is one of this kind of men, and though he can trace a ſyſtem through all its mazes, he is incapable of expatiating on the common ſubjects of a new play, a new face, a new miniſtry, with tolerable accuracy or politeneſs.

One might naturally ſuppoſe, that when at laſt theſe exalted perſonages con-

deſcend to open their lips, ſomething uncommonly excellent would come out; but we often, in other inſtances as well as in this, indulge our expectations farther than reaſon and experience ſeem to juſtify. The greateſt men are ſtill but men, and in the common intercourſe of life, are upon a level with the vulgar. I dare ſay, you remember a ſhrewd remark of a writer, whoſe name I cannot recollect, That no great man ever appeared great in the eyes of his *Valet de Chambre*. In truth, many objects in the moral, as well as natural world, ſeem larger when viewed imperfectly and obſcurely. The meteor which ſtrikes the diſtant beholder with fear and aſtoniſhment, is found, upon a nearer view, to be nothing but a vapour; and the philoſopher who is the object of awe and veneration among thoſe who never approach him, becomes, when cloſely inſpected in the humble occupations of common life, no more than a common man.

Life has often been compared to a Drama, and the world to a Stage. I believe the ſubject we have been now conſidering

ſidering will increaſe the reſemblance. Various indeed are the characters when they appear on the public Stage, but when they retire behind the ſcenes, and put off the glittering outſide which faſcinated beholders, the monarch, the hero, the philoſopher, are found in thoſe common weakneſſes which humiliate their aſpiring nature, to be nearly on a level with the beggar and the peaſant.

It has been ſaid, that one man is capable of excelling others, in qualities ſuperinduced by his own efforts, as much as the ſpecies of man ſurpaſſes the ſpecies of brutes. This indeed is apparently true; yet he who expects to find the moſt improved individuals uniformly excellent, knows little of human nature. A Grandiſon is no leſs fabulous than a Phœnix.

ESSAY XXV.

ON THE ODYSSEY.

IT is generally agreed, that the Odyſſey is inferior to the Iliad. It is thought by Longinus, as well as by other critics, to have been the production of Homer's old age, when it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed the ardour of his genius was ſomewhat abated. "In the Odyſſey," ſays that critic*, he may be juſtly ſaid to reſemble "the ſetting ſun, whoſe grandeur ſtill "remains without the original heat of "his beams. Like the ocean whoſe very "ſhores, when deſerted by the tide, mark "out how wide it ſometimes flows; ſo "Homer's genius, when ebbing into all "thoſe fabulous and incredible ramblings "of Ulyſſes, ſhews plainly how ſublime "it once had been. I am ſpeaking of "old age (ſays he) but it is the old age "of Homer."

* Sect. 9. See Smith's Tranſ.

It is certain, that if the Odyſſey is not to be placed in the ſame rank with the Iliad, ſo neither ought it to obtain ſo low a claſs as to be overlooked and diſregarded. It has, however, been neglected by the moderns, and they who have been able to repeat the Iliad, have ſcarcely deigned to read the Odyſſey. Every ſchool-boy is acquainted with the anger of Achilles and its conſequences, while he neither knows nor is ſolicitous to learn the adventures of the wiſe Ulyſſes: though wiſdom, it may be ſuppoſed, would be commonly a better model for his imitation than valour.

An ingenious writer has endeavoured to vindicate the Odyſſey from the neglect in which it has long lain; but a prepoſſeſſion in favour of eſtabliſhed cuſtoms, has hitherto prevented our public ſchools from ſubſtituting it in the room of the Iliad. That the Iliad ſhould be neglected is not indeed to be wiſhed, but that it ſhould engroſs our whole attention, to the utter excluſion of the Odyſſey, can only

only be the effect of falſe taſte, ignorance, or obſtinacy.

The Iliad preſents us with a rough proſpect like that of high mountains, craggy rocks, and foaming cataracts; while the Odyſſey exhibits a ſofter ſcene, and ſuggeſts ideas ſimilar to thoſe which ariſe from the landſcape where all is mild, ſerene, and beautiful. A reader admires the Iliad, but he loves the Odyſſey.

The works of Homer appeared ſo early in the world, and ſince their appearance have been ſo frequently praiſed and illuſtrated, that at this late period it is difficult to add to the general panegyric. Suffice it to recommend the peruſal of a few authors, which may clear the way to the ſtudy of the Odyſſey. Among theſe, are the papers in the Adventurer on this ſubject, Pope's Notes to his Tranſlation, and above all Mr. Spence's very ingenious Eſſay. As to the Tranſlation itſelf, it abounds with faults and abſurdities. Without derogating* from the

* The character of Pope muſt by no means ſuffer, ſince he undoubtedly performed all that he undertook;

the merit of Pope as an original poet, we may venture to pronounce his Odyſſey a paraphraſe, rather than a juſt tranſlation of Homer. The copy no more reſembles the picture, than the portrait on a ſign uſually reſembles the perſonage intended to be exhibited. The chief beauty of Homer is ſimplicity, which in the Tranſlation is ſacrificed to falſe glare and artificial embelliſhments. As a poem conſidered by itſelf, it has ſome beautiful paſſages; but as a tranſlation, it is perhaps unworthy the reputation it has obtained.

To cenſure ſo celebrated a name, might appear arrogant in an individual, were he not ſupported by a critic, whoſe opinion is

for he ſays in his preface to the Iliad. "Upon the "whole I muſt confeſs myſelf utterly incapable of "doing juſtice to Homer. I attempt him in no "other hope than that which one may entertain "without much vanity, of giving a more tolerable "copy of him than any entire Tranſlation in verſe "has yet done." Every competent judge muſt allow that his Tranſlation is as much ſuperior to thoſe of Hobbes, Chapman, and Ogilby, as it is inferior to the original. Its merit is called in queſtion with no other view, than that the reader may not acquieſce in it, and lay aſide the Greek as uſeleſs.

deciſive

deciſive and *inſtar omnium*. This is no other than Mr. Spence, who, in his Eſſay on the Odyſſey, with the greateſt moderation and candour, points out defects in Pope's Tranſlation, which could never have eſcaped ſo great a poet, but from haſte and wearineſs. In this work, Pope was aſſiſted by inferior writers; but as the whole is publiſhed under his name, he will ever be anſwerable for its faults.

Mr. Spence's Eſſay, at the ſame time that it will exhibit the deformities of the Tranſlation, will inſpire a taſte for the beauties of the original; and, indeed, the general remarks, which are interſperſed with the greateſt judgment and elegance, will contribute to teach a juſt method of criticiſm in almoſt every ſpecies of poetry.

Mr. Spence was a truly claſſical writer. He was no leſs amiable in his manners than pleaſing in his productions. That he chiefly wrote in dialogue is to be lamented; for that form, where the perſons are fictitious, has ſeldom been approved in England.

ESSAY XXVI.

ON THE OEDIPUS TYRANNUS OF SOPHOCLES.

OF the three Greek dramatic poets, Sophocles is the moſt celebrated; and of the productions of Sophocles, the Œdipus Tyrannus is the moſt excellent. It has ſtood the teſt of the ſevereſt criticiſm. The unities of time, place, and action, are inviolably preſerved: and while the Tragedy ſatisfies the critic, who judges it by the laws of Ariſtotle, it pleaſes the common reader and ſpectator, who judges it only by the feelings of nature. Never was there a tale more affecting than that of Œdipus, and never was it told more pathetically than by Sophocles. Many a tear has it excited from an Athenian audience, whoſe hearts were ever finely ſuſceptible of the feelings of humanity: but the beſt tranſlation of it would not equally pleaſe in a modern theatre. Many other cauſes of its failure may be aſſigned, beſides that ſimplicity, artleſsneſs, and incomplexity

complexity of fable, which the taſte of the moderns is too much vitiated to reliſh.

In the firſt place, it muſt be conſidered, that every original compoſition muſt loſe ſomething of its beauty from the beſt tranſlation. It is a common remark, that the ſpirit of an author, like that of ſome eſſences, evaporates by transfuſion. Foreign manners, and foreign cuſtoms, are ſeldom underſtood, and as ſeldom approved. The majority of an Engliſh audience are unacquainted with antient learning, and can take no pleaſure in the repreſentation of men and things which have never fallen under their notice. Add to this, that they love to ſee Tragedies formed on their own hiſtories, or on hiſtories in which they are in ſome manner nearly intereſted. When Shakeſpeare's hiſtorical dramas are repreſented, they feel as Engliſhmen in every event; they take part with their Edwards and Henries, as friends and fellow-countrymen; they glory in their ſucceſſes, and ſympathize with their misfortunes. To a ſimilar circumſtance may part of the applauſe, which the Athe-

nians beſtowed on this Tragedy of Sophocles be attributed; for Œdipus was king of a neighbouring country, with which the Athenians were always intimately concerned either in war or peace.

Theſe conſiderations ſhould teach us to content ourſelves with admiring Sophocles in the cloſet, without attempting to obtrude him on the Stage, which muſt always accommodate itſelf to the taſte of the time, whether unreaſonable or juſt, conſiſtent or capricious.

In truth, the warmeſt admirer of antient Greek poetry muſt acknowledge a barrenneſs of invention in the choice of ſubjects. The Trojan war, and the misfortunes of the Theban king, are almoſt the only ſources from which thoſe great maſters of compoſition, Homer, Æſchylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, have derived their ſubject matter. They have, indeed, embelliſhed theſe little parts of hiſtory with all the fire of imagination and melody of poetry; but is it not ſtrange, that in a country like Greece, where the reſtleſs ſpirit of military virtue was continually forming noble deſigns,

ſigns, and atchieving glorious exploits, the poets could diſcover no illuſtrious deed worthy of being painted in never fading colours, but the worn-out ſtories of a wooden horſe, and a Sphinx's riddle? It is difficult for an age like the preſent, which hungers and thirſts after novelty, to conceive that an audience could ſit with patience during the recital of a ſtory which all muſt have heard a thouſand times; eſpecially as it was unadorned with the meretricious artifices of players, with thunder and lightning, hail and ſnow, tolling bells, and tinſel garments.

But the fameneſs of the ſtory in the Grecian poets, became agreeable to the audience, through that veneration which every thing that bears a mark of antiquity demands. That the ſtory on which a dramatic poem is founded, ſhould not be of modern date, has, I think, been laid down as a rule. Nor is it the precept of an arbitrary critic, but is juſtified by nature and reaſon. Imagination always exceeds reality. The vulgar could never prevail upon themſelves to look on ſcenes, to the

reality of which they have been eye-witneſſes, with the ſame ardour as on thoſe which they have received from their anceſtors, and have painted with the ſtrongeſt colours on their fancy. In obedience to this rule, the Greek poets took their ſubjects from antient facts univerſally known, believed, and admired: and the audience entered the theatre, to behold a lively repreſentation of the picture already formed in their imagination.

A modern reader has not a preparatory diſpoſition of mind neceſſary to receive all that pleaſure from theſe compoſitions, which tranſported an antient Greek. He does not glow with the patriotic ardour he would feel on reading the glorious deeds of a fellow countryman, when Homer repreſents a hero breaking the Trojan Phalanx and encountering a Hector. He does not conſider an antient Theban or Athenian involved in the guilt of undeſigned parricide or inceſt, nearly enough connected with him to excite his ſympathy in a violent degree: but all theſe feelings in a Grecian audience, occaſioned by

by a Grecian ſufferer, account for that uncommon delight which they took in their dramatic repreſentations, and for their freedom from that ſatiety which a reiterated tale might otherwiſe have occaſioned.

An Engliſh audience has lately ſhewn itſelf not ſo averſe from the antient Tragedy, as was expected, by its favourable reception of Elfrida and Caractacus, written on the Grecian model: but, perhaps, this event is not ſo much to be attributed to the revival of the refined taſte of an Attic audience, as to the inſatiable avidity of ſomething new. The Engliſh are as fond of the καινον τι in literature, as the Athenians were in politics: but however this may be, Elfrida and Caractacus are elegant poems, formed exactly on the antient model, and may be read with great advantage by thoſe who wiſh to entertain a juſt idea of the Greek Tragedy without a knowledge of the original language.

ESSAY XXVII.

A LETTER FROM ARISTARCHUS MINOR.

AT about fifteen, I was articled to an attorney in a certain market town at a conſiderable diſtance from the capital. As my maſter's buſineſs was not very extenſive, conſiſting only in drawing leaſes and ſettling diſputes between the farmers and vicars of the neighbourhood, I found a great deal of leiſure time upon my hands. To thoſe who are deſtined to a ſedentary life, books are a conſtant refuge from the liſtleſsneſs of inactivity. From a natural propenſity to detraction, I found myſelf particularly delighted with thoſe authors, who exerted their abilities in the diſcovery of blemiſhes in writers of eſtabliſhed reputation. There is a ſecret triumph in bringing down one's ſuperior, to a level with one's ſelf, and defeating the attempts of arrogance and ſelf-ſufficiency. With this opinion, you may eaſily imagine, that I found a large fund of entertainment in peruſing thoſe mortifiers

ſters of modern vanity, the Periodical Reviews. By this courſe of ſtudy, I made, in a ſhort time, a conſiderable proficiency in the art of criticiſm. I could talk of ſentiment, harmony of verſification, originality of thought, diſcrimination of character, and a hundred other matters of which I had no clear idea, with the greateſt fluency: and at a little club, which conſiſted of the curate, the exciſeman, a brother clerk, and myſelf, I ſhone in pointing out the faults of every new play, and ſhewing the ſophiſtry of every new pamphlet. My remarks were always received with great applauſe, and I became the oracle of taſte within the purlieus of the corporation.

The ſucceſs of my critical attempts encouraged me to aſſume another employment. I took it for granted, that a perſon of my acknowledged theoretical ſkill could be under no difficulty in practice. I began, therefore, as Pope expreſſes it, to pen a ſtanza, when I ſhould engroſs: but as every great deſign is gradually brought to perfection, I did not commence

mence a volume-author (if I may coin a term) at once. Songs, epigrams, anagrams, acroſtics, ænigmas, elegies, and odes, were my poetical compoſitions. In proſe, I wrote accounts of extraordinary inundations that never happened; explanations of phænomena which never appeared; hiſtories of uncommon birds, beaſts, and plants, which never had exiſtence; eſſays on various ſubjects which I knew nothing about; ſketches of characters of perſons unknown, and a thouſand other matters too tedious to be enumerated. Theſe I diſpatched with great ſecrecy to the editors, proprietors, publiſhers, printers, authors, or whatever name they chooſe, of *grand* or *imperial* Magazines. I cannot eaſily deſcribe the raptures I felt on firſt ſeeing a child of my own brain in print; how did I ſwell in my own eyes! Ye Homers, ye Virgils, how fallen were ye, how eclipſed! but however great my triumphs were at firſt, I found my ardour gradually abate when I perceived pieces of more mediocrity than my own, admitted into theſe repoſitories

tories of inſtruction and delight, without exception. My good opinion of my own abilities was not leſſened, but I thought them degraded by condeſcending to mix my productions with thoſe of every paltry ſcribbler. It was at this period, therefore, that I formed a reſolution of publiſhing ſome large work, and glowed with a deſire of acquiring immortal fame.

In the mean time, my purſuits in the department of the law went on ſlowly. To a man of a fine imagination, or at leaſt to a man who thought himſelf ſuch, the phlegmatic employment of copying a leaſe became intolerable. The diſagreeableneſs of this fatigue, and the extravagant hopes I entertained, determined me in a deſign, which I had long meditated, of quitting my profeſſion, of haſtening to that region of poets and of patrons, the metropolis, and of ſupplying the want of ſix and eight-penny fees, with the profits of publication and everlaſting honour.

In purſuance of this plan I left the market town, poſted to London, hired an exalted

exalted chamber, and aſſumed the pen. I looked round the regions of literature to fix upon ſome ſubject fit for the diſplay of my abilities. After mature deliberation, I found the moſt lucrative views appeared from the Theatre. A Tragedy, therefore, was my choice. When I had, at length, read all Dryden's prefaces, and one or two French critiques on dramatic poetry, I began my poem, and finiſhed it in a few months. My vanity was ſo great, that I took for granted, the managers would be under obligations to me for my offer, without ſuſpecting the leaſt difficulty in prevailing on them to exhibit my performance: but, alas! how was I chagrined, when, after much vexatious attendance, my Tragedy was returned with evident marks of contempt! This treatment, I aſſured myſelf, was the effect of envy and malevolence. Without heſitation, therefore, I reſolved to appeal to the world, and put my enemies to confuſion. My piece was printed, advertiſed, and ſtuck up in the bookſeller's window: but, alas! there was not a purchaſer, and the copies, of which by my direction many

many thouſand were printed, in order to ſatisfy the avidity of the public, were ſent in loads on the porter's back to the manufacturer's at the corner of St. Paul's Church Yard.

Though I was now ſufficiently checked in my career of vanity, yet I found a motive for writing in the deficiency of my finances. As it is poſſible, that he who fails in one thing may ſucceed in another, I reſolved to try my fortune in proſaic compoſition: but here again I was in doubt what taſk to undertake. Sermons were grown a drug; otherwiſe, I could have found in my heart to have written Sermons to old maids, or to young maids, or to citizens, or to aſſes, as it has lately been much the vogue to limit the diſcourſes of modern theologiſts, to one claſs of perſons. Hiſtories of England were, likewiſe, become uſeleſs lumber, or elſe I could have publiſhed a neat little edition of fifty volumes or ſo, with portraits truly original, as they would certainly have been taken from no pictures. Novels were overdone, or I could have produced three or four neat pocket

pocket volumes in the twinkling of an eye, only by ſtealing from thoſe which were publiſhed the laſt year, as they were entirely forgotten by the next. After various reſolves, I determined at laſt to make a couple of neat volumes of Travels through the Northern Part of Europe, by a gentleman juſt returned. Accordingly, I ſet about gathering together all the old books of Travels I could procure, and by the aſſiſtance of theſe, with a little mixture of my own inventions, I filled two volumes with as pretty a narrative as you would wiſh to ſee. The ſcheme took at firſt, and a ſufficient number went off to pay all expences, when unluckily an ill-natured critic produced the authorities from which I had taken my account, and ſpoiled the ſale before I had gotten enough to pay my landlady.

Theſe, and many other diſappointments, I ſuffered as an author. As to fame, I was not much afflicted with the want of that. When the purſe is empty, the mind ſoon grows callous to the praiſes or

cenſures

cenſures of the world, and eaſily learns to prefer ſolid pence to an empty name. Thus I reſolved to give up all thoughts of laurels and immortality, and labour for my temporal welfare. Accordingly, I hired myſelf journeyman to a magazine maker, and working by the ſheet with great expedition, made ſhift to earn a livelihood. In this ſituation I ſtill continue, and, indeed, am ſometimes in my element; for my maſter, like the reſt, has undertaken to criticiſe the works of his contemporaries, and as this job is left for me, I do not fail to make others feel the laſh under which I have ſo often ſmarted.

ESSAY XXVIII.

ON CASIMIR, THE LATIN POET OF POLAND.

AT the revival of learning, the languages of Europe were ſo rude and barbarous, that writers, who would expreſs their thoughts with elegance, were obliged to renounce their vernacular tongue, and to adopt that of ancient Rome. By frequent exerciſe in this mode of writing, they acquired ſuch facility that though they could not turn a period in their own idiom, they could write volumes of Latin with all the purity and perſpicuity of the Auguſtan age. They who have once acquired an excellence in any art, ſoon excite a general emulation. The practice of compoſing in Latin, which firſt aroſe from neceſſity, was continued by choice and predilection: and at this day to declaim in Latin, is a principal exerciſe in our univerſities, although our own language has long been ſufficiently poliſhed and refined to admit of

of all the grace, harmony, and force, of correct compoſition.

An author has lately ventured to aſſert, that many modern Latin writers have not only equalled, but excelled the Romans themſelves. In ſupport of this paradoxical aſſertion, he offers a plauſible conjecture. They who have written ſince Latin became a dead language, have had an opportunity of forming their ſtyle on the beſt models, and at the ſame time were incapable of corrupting it by colloquial barbariſms. They have been enabled to ſelect the beauties without the deformities of the language, and to gather the roſe unincumbered with the thorn.

Though this writer's opinion cannot be in general adopted, yet it muſt be confeſſed, that the literary world is indebted to the practice of writing in Latin for many excellent performances which are ſtill extant; and which, next to the claſſics themſelves, may be read with the greateſt pleaſure and improvement. Theſe, however, would never have ſurvived, had they been compoſed in the vernacular language of their authors.

Among the modern Latin poets, who deſerve particular attention, may be enumerated Caſimir, of Poland. He is indeed leſs known to fame, than Vida and Barberinus; but his comparative obſcurity may, perhaps, be owing to his being in a leſs conſpicuous ſtation of life than thoſe poets, one of whom was a Biſhop and the other a Pope: and they who know how much wealth and honours contribute to the extenſion of literary fame, will not deem this an unſatisfactory account.

Vida has confeſſedly imitated Virgil, and in many parts of his works, with ſucceſs. The Chriſtiad, however, though it has a few ſtriking paſſages, is, upon the whole, a very faulty production; and may be produced as an example to prove, that literary undertakings ſeldom ſucceed when they are not the voluntary effuſion of genius, but are extorted by the command of authority. His Art of Poetry, though written rather in the ſtyle of Virgil than of Horace, the proper model of Didactic poetry, contains many uſeful rules, and

furniſhes entertainment in the peruſal. The Art of managing Silk-worms, is a poem in imitation of the Georgics, and may be pronounced a very pleaſing compoſition.

Of Barberinus, ſome of the poems are tolerable: but if he be permitted to eſcape cenſure, he is entitled to little praiſe. It may with truth be aſſerted, that many an Engliſh ſchool-boy has written Latin verſes, as an exerciſe, far more excellent than thoſe of this author, who, however, has been celebrated in every Univerſity of Europe. He certainly had a taſte for learning, and for the works of genius; and the world is highly indebted to him, as the patron of thoſe arts in which he did not himſelf greatly excel.

Candour muſt allow, that Caſimir is not only ſuperior to theſe two, but, in lyric poetry, to moſt who have ſucceeded him. Whether he imitates Pindar, Sappho, Anacreon, or Horace, he is ſucceſsful. His thoughts are ſublime, or tender, as the ſubject requires; his language elegant, and his verſe harmonious. Moral and religious ſubjects, he treats

with a claſſical elegance; and when he is celebrating a hero, or a ſtateſman, he joins all the force of maſculine eloquence, with all the fire of animated poetry. In ſome of his pieces, the critics have diſcovered a want of claſſical purity; but though the charge cannot be denied, it may be extenuated. The moderns have many ideas which the antients had not, and which conſequently cannot be expreſſed in their phraſeology. Whenever, therefore, an author's ſubject ſuggeſts ſuch ideas, he muſt indeed accommodate his expreſſion, as nearly as he can, to the Roman purity; but after all his efforts, it will neceſſarily be unclaſſical. One diſadvantage under which Caſimir, as well as all other modern Latin poets laboured, was, that the names of perſons and places, though latinized in their terminations, ſtill retain a Gothic ſound, which diſguſts an ear accuſtomed to the elegant compoſitions of an Auguſtan age.

I know not whether there is any complete tranſlation of the works of this poet, but there are ſome of his Odes paraphraſed

paraphraſed by Dr. Watts, who, though perhaps too much inclined to enthuſiaſm in religious notions, is allowed to have been a man of judgment, learning, and ingenuity. Theſe, though few, may ſerve to give a general idea of the merit of the numerous other pieces, few of which are inferior to theſe, many excel them. That author, in his preface to his *Horæ Lyricæ*, ſpeaks of Caſimir, as a poet of uncommon merit, and his opinion is ſufficient to eſtabliſh the reputation of the Poliſh bard.

Whatever may be ſaid in praiſe of particular Latin poets, will be neglected by thoſe who affect in general to deſpiſe all modern Latin poetry. They uſually aſk, with an air of ridicule, in what the utility of ſuch productions conſiſts. To which may reaſonably be replied, that every ſpecies of compoſition is uſeful, which furniſhes an elegant amuſement for the liberal. Indeed their objection may be deſpiſed and neglected, ſince they only can thus generally condemn the productions of modern Latin poets, who have not poetical taſte enough to comprehend their beauties.

ESSAY XXIX.

ON THE NEGLECT OF ANTIENT AUTHORS.

THOUGH it be true, that in the preſent times, learning is univerſally admired, and the character of a man of taſte and letters is affected not only in colleges, but in polite circles; not only by the philoſopher, but by the beau and the coxcomb; yet is it to be lamented, that there ſeems to remain no reliſh for ſolid erudition, very little veneration for the inimitable productions of Greece and Rome, and but a ſlight attention to the more abſtruſe ſciences and abſtracted diſquiſitions. We read for pleaſure, for amuſement, for mere paſtime, which dry argument and connected reaſoning cannot always furniſh. Light, airy, ſuperficial compoſitions, without fatiguing the intellect, flatter the imagination; and for the ſake of this empty ſatisfaction, to this trivial kind of reading is our time devoted, without regard to improvement of morals, or enlargement of underſtanding.

From

From neglecting the writers of antiquity, we become ignorant of their beauties, vainly ſuppoſe, that excellence is confined to modern authors, and that the antients can be admired only by prejudice and bigotry. Even they who are really ſenſible of the excellence of the claſſics, are willing, becauſe they have neglected the ſtudy of them, to depretiate their merits, and to extenuate the infamy of their ignorance, by pretending that the knowledge of them is not deſirable. Some there are, who, though they profeſs an admiration of the antients, read them not in the originals, becauſe they think, without the trouble of loading their memories with dead languages, to taſte all their beauties through the medium of tranſlations.

To thoſe who affirm, that an admiration of the antients is founded on prejudice, it is ſufficient to reply, that the unanimous applauſe of whole nations for many ages, cannot, with the appearance of reaſon, be attributed to implicit attachment, or ignorant wonder.

As

As for thoſe who condemn the Greek and Latin authors, becauſe they will not take the pains to underſtand them, they are to be cenſured for their indolence, and deſpiſed for their artifice: and they who read a Horace, or a Virgil, in an Engliſh tranſlation, however well performed, muſt be told, that they will form no better idea of the inexpreſſible graces of theſe poets, than they would receive of the maſter-pieces of a Raphael, or a Guido, from the daubing of a mere copyiſt. In the transfuſion from one language to another, as it has been frequently remarked, the ſpirit evaporates, and ſeldom any thing remains but a *caput mortuum*.

The matter may be preſerved, the ideas juſtly exhibited, the hiſtorical part accurately repreſented; but the MANNER, the ſtyle, the beauties of diction, which conſtitute more than half the excellence of the claſſics, can ſeldom be transferred to a modern language.

ESSAY XXX.

ON THE INFERIORITY OF MODERN TO ANTIENT ELOQUENCE.

A Certain author, in a compariſon between antient and modern Eloquence, endeavours to account for the inferiority of the latter, by ſeveral probable cauſes. The firſt, on which he ſeems to lay the greater ſtreſs, is, that ſhould any one attain to the perfection of antient eloquence, he would find, that ſo far from moving a modern audience by the blaze of figures and the thunder of exclamation, he would only relax the muſcles of riſibility: for which reaſon, moſt of our orators content themſelves with plain argument and ſolid ſenſe, without aiming at warming the heart, or elevating the fancy. This reaſoning, therefore, tends to prove, that from a voluntary ſubmiſſion, and not from a want of ability, the moderns yield in Eloquence to the Greeks and Romans.

Here

Here a queſtion ariſes, How it comes to paſs, that Eloquence, which once was able to inflame the mind, to change fixed reſolutions, and to manage the paſſions at will, ſhould now be found ridiculous and ineffectual? In order to make the queſtion as clear as poſſible, let us, for a moment, introduce Cicero into the Houſe of Commons; let us imagine him wiping his brow with the ſudarium, ſtamping on* the ground, and, in ſhort, let us ſuppoſe him in the middle of his ſecond Philippic. In the mean time, let us caſt our eyes upon the ſenators, and then anſwer the queſtion, how it happens, that inſtead of an univerſal tremor and a general aſtoniſhment, nothing is to be obſerved but indifference and contempt?

To ſatisfy ourſelves in this enquiry, let us remember, that the Houſe of Commons is a learned body: but the Senate of Rome, in the age of Cicero, conſiſted, as we may collect from the monuments of thoſe times, of men ſenſible indeed, and

* The Supplofio Pedis was common among the antient orators.

virtuous,

virtuous, but not much verſed in the ſchools of the philoſophers. A flouriſhing harangue, addreſſed to the former, alarms their jealouſy. Acquainted with the ſubterfuges of artificial oratory, they reſent the inſolence of the ſpeaker who imagines they are ſimple enough to be miſled by his rhetoric. The latter, unſuſpecting that power which, to uſe Milton's phraſe, can make the better cauſe appear the worſe, look upon the vehement effuſions of a Cicero's eloquence, as the genuine effects of a ſincere conviction. This, perhaps, may account for the different conſequences of the ſame degree of excellence in oratory, when addreſſed to a Britiſh Parliament and a Roman Senate.

But we frequently compare orations which Cicero ſpoke before the Plebeians of Rome, the mere *fæx Romuli*, with the ſpeeches of our Stateſmen addreſſed to the Parliament, conſiſting of the moſt refined and intelligent men of the nation. Here what was urged above, will have greater force, inaſmuch as the refinement of the Senators

Senators of Rome exceeded that of the loweſt of the citizens.

The ſum of the matter is, perhaps, that the moderns have a genius for Eloquence, as well as the antients; but they do not often exert this genius, and the reaſon of their not exerting it is, that it would have no effect, and it would have no effect, becauſe the audience of a modern orator differs in diſpoſition from that of an antient, and the difference conſiſts in this, that the latter were leſs refined than the former.

It is plain then, if a modern audience, of no more refinement than the antient Romans, were to hear a modern orator of no leſs eloquence than Cicero, that they would be affected as the Romans were in ſimilar circumſtances. Let us endeavour to diſcover, whether this which appears true in theory is ſo in fact.

In the firſt place, where ſhall we find this orator and this audience? Not in the courts of Weſtminſter-hall, nor in the Houſes of Parliament, for reaſons already aſſigned. Perhaps, we may meet with the audience

audience though not the orator in our religious aſſemblies. We all know there are popular preachers; perhaps, curioſity has led us to compoſe a part of the congregation of one of theſe religious demagogues. Here we have ſome veſtiges of the effects of antient Eloquence. In theſe places, a much lower degree of excellence than that of a Demoſthenes, or Cicero, will excite tears, will terrify, aſtoniſh, comfort, and diſmay. Conſiſtently with what has been advanced, the minds which are thus affected are commonly thoſe of the rude uncultivated multitude.

We are told, that while Cicero was pouring forth a torrent of eloquence, and ſeemed highly ſatisfied with himſelf, Cato, one of the beſt informed members of the Senate, in that great orator's time, could not help burſting into a fit of laughter. This circumſtance duly conſidered, ſeems to corroborate the opinion which we have endeavoured to eſtabliſh.

Nor can any thing we have ſaid juſtly leſſen Cicero as an orator, if it be the excellence of oratory to adapt harangues

to the abilities, the inclinations, and the prejudices of the hearers. To an audience capable of being moved by nothing but impaſſioned eloquence, the antients offered the ſplendor of images, the vehemence of protracted periods, and the pathos of animated zeal.

By parity of reaſoning, the moderns are equally excellent with the antients. To a refined, ſenſible, diſpaſſionate aſſembly, they ſpeak in a refined, ſenſible, diſpaſſionate manner: and without doubt, truth will be more eaſily diſcovered by ſuch a mode of inveſtigation, than by the artificial flouriſhes of rhetoric. In reality it ſeems not to be wiſhed, that antient Eloquence were revived; ſince its chief merit conſiſted in fallacies; and as after our utmoſt endeavours, we find it difficult to diſcover naked truth with the undazzled eye of reaſon, it ſhould ſeem extreme folly to go in ſearch of a loſt art; which if recovered, would only tend to add confidence to falſhood, and to increaſe the natural modeſty of truth.

ESSAY XXXI.

REFLECTIONS ON THE ART OF PHYSIC.

WE cannot help feeling a pleaſure, mixed indeed with ſevere regret, while we look back on the Antediluvian World, and read the fabulous accounts of a golden age. The abſence of that natural evil, which has ever ſince infuſed into the cup of human felicity a bitter mixture, muſt have rendered exiſtence itſelf, excluding poſitive gratifications, an uninterrupted pleaſure, and muſt have heightened every actual enjoyment, by admitting the comfortable reflection, that preſent indulgence was not to be paid for by future pain.

But the golden age exiſted only in the regions of poetry. Moral evil ſoon made its appearance in an animal ſo imperfect as man, and had an immediate tendency to produce natural. The gratification of the animal appetites was, for obvious rea-

ſons, connected with pleaſure; and in order to prolong or improve that pleaſure, recourſe was had to refinement and exceſs. Theſe not only ſuperinduced diſeaſe, but occaſioned an imbecillity, that rendered it more difficult to be removed.

Man, furniſhed by nature with a greater ſuſceptibility of pleaſure, than was indulged to other animals, was poſſeſſed likewiſe of a ſuperior ſagacity, which enabled him to modify and heighten his enjoyments with all the ſubtlety of art. His boaſted reaſon became the pander of his appetites. A taſte for ſimple food and ſimple manners, the one the beſt preſervative of health, the other of innocence, was loſt amid the acquired advantages of civilization.

The human body, even in the earlieſt ages, and before the univerſal prevalence of luxury, was indeed expoſed to various diſeaſes. Its complicated organization rendered its motions eaſy to be retarded or obſtructed by the unavoidable influence of an atmoſphere. We find that animals, who approach nearly to a ſtate of nature, are

are yet ſubject to a variety of diſtempers. The moſt uſeful auxiliary of man is known to labour under many violent diſorders, though his food is a pure, vegetable production, preſented to him in its higheſt perfection, and not adulterated by the hand of man. In the infancy of the world, it may reaſonably be concluded from analogy, the body was produced in a ſtronger and ſounder ſtate, than after the lapſe of many thouſand ages, when vice has contaminated the very ſources of population. Freſh from the hand of plaſtic nature, the body was not only more beautiful and proportionate, but leſs diſpoſed to admit morbid commixtures, and better enabled to expel them. Yet even then, the effects of the weather, of accidents, of long faſting, or repletion, were neceſſarily felt, and were followed by diſeaſe.

Expoſed to wants, to external dangers, and internal weakneſſes, the impatient mind of man ſoon applied itſelf to the invention of arts, which taught compendious methods of ſupply, of defence, and

of remedy. The uſe of iron once diſcovered, gave him the ſuperiority of a more elevated order of beings over thoſe to whom it continued unknown, and the dominion which he acquired over the brutes, exalted him ſtill higher in the ſcale of dignity and power. But though labour was facilitated and ſecurity obtained, yet neither mechanical ingenuity, nor the protection gained by adventitious power, could allay the heat of a fever, or aſſuage the violence of pain; evils which attacked him in the hours of his repoſe, and found their way to him through the walls of the rampart or the caſtle.

The perſonal feelings of the ſufferer, and the anxiety of thoſe who were moſt nearly allied to him by the ties of blood and affection incited the ſpirit of induſtry and reſearch to procure alleviation. Charms and amulets were the firſt expedients ſuggeſted to the rude mind of the barbarian, ever more inclined to indulge the deluſive hopes of ſuperſtition, than to liſten to the voice of ſober reaſon. But even theſe expedients, inadequate

adequate as they appeared, were yet often productive of beneficial effects. Many diſorders, if not quite imaginary, derived much of their violence from the force of imagination. From the ſame ſource their cure was to be obtained. A bead worn a certain time, an inſignificant ceremony performed with the rituals of ſuperſtition could not effect any immediate alteration in the animal œconomy; but they gave eaſe to the mind of the ſufferer, and by reſtoring chearfulneſs and ſpirits, often became really efficacious.

Nor were theſe fanciful methods of cure confined to the ages of ignorance. They who are acquainted with vulgar life, and the manners of thoſe who reſide at a diſtance from the capital, muſt have obſerved a variety of ſuperſtitious practices ſcarcely to be equalled in abſurdity by the rudeſt nations. There are at leaſt a hundred methods of curing an ague, without internal or external application. The poor patient has recourſe to ſome aged matron, who, like the god of phyſic, profeſſes the arts of medicine and prophecy; and he

ſeeks not the aid of the regular practitioner, while he can obtain the ſupernatural aſſiſtance of a charm. He waits without reluctance for relief; the diſorder decreaſes by the effects of time and conſtitutional vigour; the credit of the cure is given to the charm; he recommends it in his turn to others, and ſuperſtition prevails in an enlightened age, amid all the triumphs of truth and philoſophy.

Medicine was however early cultivated as an art, founded on certain principles, and confided in by the ſenſible part of mankind as the moſt probable means of relief. The ſlaughter of victims for ſacrifice, and of animals for food, gave an opportunity of inſpecting the parts of organized bodies, which bore a great analogy to the human conſtitution. Chirurgery and phyſic derived from this ſource equal opportunities for improvement. Indeed it is preſumed, that chirurgical operations were the firſt efforts of the medical art. External maladies, as they were moſt viſible, called more immediately for relief; and external application was the eaſieſt

eaſieſt and moſt obvious to reflection. Both branches of the art, long after its invention, were united in the ſame profeſſor, as they uſually are at preſent among our rural practitioners. There is indeed ſufficient reaſon for their combination, ſince a ſkill in them muſt in great meaſure reſult from a knowledge of the ſame principles; yet, at the ſame time, each of them will probably be carried to a greater height, when ſeparately purſued by different perſons. This indeed ſeems to accord with the deciſions of experience; for, of thoſe who have arrived at ſingular eminence in either of theſe arts, few have choſen to invade the province of the other. Cheſelden did not preſcribe in a fever, nor did Radcliffe undertake an amputation.

The Greeks, whoſe happy polity was admirably adapted to call forth all thoſe fine qualities of the mind with which they were ſingularly furniſhed by nature, advanced not only the ornamental arts of painting, poetry, and ſculpture, to perfection, but cultivated the uſeful one of phy-

ſic with a ſucceſs which has enabled the moderns to make their boaſted improvements. The writings of Hippocrates, though, for obvious reaſons, ſlighted by the buſy practitioner, are held in high eſtimation by the learned phyſician. And if the preſcriptions of the Cöan ſeem to want ſimplicity, and fail of their effect at this period and in our climate; yet have they been of eſſential ſervice to the art, by introducing the dogmatical in the room of the empirical method; and their failure may be reaſonably attributed to the alterations, which the human frame is found to undergo in the revolution of ages, by a general change of dietetic regimen; by removing to different climates, and incorporating with races of men, who ſeem to be ſpecifically diſtinguiſhed from the reſt.

Though the writings of the antients, of Hippocrates and Galen, of Rhazes and Avicenna, are often talked of by the modern profeſſor, yet are they ſeldom read. Experience, which, after all, is the only teſt of utility, ſeems to juſtify the neglect. Practical medicine is leſs indebted

debted to books, than any other liberal art. The occaſional varieties of diſtempers are infinite; their complications diſguiſe them, and often produce a new ſpecies, or one that has never been deſcribed with accuracy. He who has recourſe to ſyſtems, is at a ſtand when he ſees a ſymptom unobſerved before; but he who has ſtudied nature in the original, knows how to change his intentions, and adapt endleſs remedies to the endleſs variety of diſorders.

From many ſimilar inſtances, Radcliffe may be ſelected to prove, that great ſkill as well as fame in this art is attainable merely by the aid of experimental phyſiology. He indeed was a genius in medicine. To books he owed but little, and was ambitious to appear leſs indebted to them than he really was. He knew, it is true, that experience, the ſafeſt guide after the mind is prepared for her inſtructions by previous inſtitution, is apt, without ſuch preparation, to degenerate to a vulgar and preſumptuous empiriciſm. He therefore laid a foundation of general and liberal

liberal knowledge derived from books, on which he erected a noble ſuperſtructure, with materials ſupplied by obſervation. He certainly poſſeſſed, in an eminent degree, a ſagacity which nature had beſtowed. But he was not a man of ſcience. Perhaps, like many of his profeſſion, he owed a great part of his fame and fortune, to the caprice of faſhion, and the concurrence of favourable circumſtances. If he did not, by his own diſcoveries, advance the boundaries of knowledge, he took the wiſeſt methods for its improvement at his death, by the moſt ample benefactions to the Univerſity of Oxford. Through the wiſdom of their application, he ſtill continues to promote the benevolent purpoſes of the medical profeſſion, in a general infirmary, raiſed there by his poſthumous bounty. Science gratefully attributes to the ſame ſource, a library and obſervatory, happily placed in a centrical ſituation, whence the ſtreams of knowledge, like the blood circulating from the heart, are generally diffuſed. Oxford had indeed long been in poſſeſſion of advantages favourable

vourable to the ſtudy of theoretic phyſic, but ſcarcely afforded any opportunities for practical information, till the erection of the Radclivian infirmary. When the intended clinical lecture ſhall be eſtabliſhed in it, the ſtudents will no longer be conſtrained to ſeek improvement in the Hoſpitals of the capital, or at a remote Univerſity.

Academical honours are conferred on this profeſſion, and it commonly leads to wealth and popular eſteem; but it was not ſo honourable among the Romans, as among us, and all the modern nations of Europe. It was commonly in the hands of ſlaves, and Antonius Muſa is almoſt the only phyſician in the golden age of learning who is mentioned with reſpect. It now poſſeſſes the rank and eſteem which it deſerves. Our phyſicians have ever united polite learning with phyſiological knowledge. Many beſides Linacre, Mead, Freind, and Akenſide, have been no leſs celebrated in the ſchools of humanity, than of ſcience, and have been favoured by Apollo as much in their poetical as their medical capacity.

Harvey, from whom is derived one of the nobleſt diſcoveries of modern philoſophy, has greatly contributed to promote the cultivation of polite literature, together with the ſkill peculiar to the profeſſion. By inſtituting an annual Latin oration, he has rendered a knowledge of the elegance of that language neceſſary to thoſe of the faculty who are deſirous of being diſtinguiſhed as men of taſte. As it might fall to the lot of any individual to ſpeak on the occaſion, each has been ſolicitous of retaining that claſſical learning, which is too often forgotten even by men of ſenſe and judgment ſoon after their emancipation from ſcholaſtic reſtraint. In purſuit of this end, they here formed a taſte for claſſical works, and have been the patrons, the admirers, and the compoſers of the moſt elegant productions. Indeed, in no order are there to be found individuals better informed, more polite, humane, ingenious, than among the regularly bred phyſicians.

And it muſt be confeſſed that many of thoſe whoſe buſineſs it is to combine

and

and adminiſter medicines according to the preſcriptions of others, who are diſtinguiſhed by academical honours, have, by the benefit of long obſervation, acquired real ſkill; and though they have not to boaſt the advantage of a very liberal education, are yet juſtly eſteemed by all whoſe eſteem is valuable. Theſe conſtitute a very numerous claſs in the community, and as they are commonly appealed to in the firſt inſtance, and entirely depended upon by the middle and inferior ranks, their medical influence is, on the whole, more extenſive than that of thoſe who hold a higher place in the national eſtimation.

When we turn our attention to the loweſt order of practitioners, empirics and pretenders, we ſee this noble art diſgracefully perverted. It is indeed much to be lamented, that the inferior and more numerous claſſes of mankind, who are moſt expoſed to accidents, and who have the feweſt alleviations, are conſtrained by indigence to ſeek relief from thoſe, who have no other preparation for the exerciſe of the art, but a ſeven years courſe of macerating

macerating drugs in a mortar, tying labels to the necks of phials, conveying medicines to patients, ſweeping a warehouſe, or kindling the fires of a laboratory. Such are often the moſt daring in the treatment of maladies, for ignorance is naturally preſumptuous. Charity has however ſtept in to remedy the evil; and numerous hoſpitals, ſcattered over the face of our country, have at once afforded an extenſive field for the exertion of beneficence, and the beſt ſchools for the improvement of medicine. In theſe places, ſkilful phyſicians preſide, and the poor have the advantage of regular attendance, of freſh and unadulterated medicines, of proper diet and cleanlineſs, in a manner highly favourable to cure, and which can hardly be ſurpaſſed by the conveniencies of opulence.

Like the pretenders to inſpiration in religion, there are many who boldly enter on the practice of this art, totally deſtitute of preparatory inſtruction, and who make a merit of their defect. Without even thoſe few lights, which may be occaſionally

occaſionally obtained in the courſe of a ſervile apprenticeſhip, they aſſume all the importance of ſufficiency, and dictate with oracular confidence. Againſt theſe vultures of mankind, againſt theſe harpies of ſociety, who ſcatter pain and death around, under pretence of affording relief; and who, for the ſake of ſupporting an unbecoming ſtation, not only delude, but deſtroy thoſe who apply to them as to friends, under the preſſure of the heavieſt calamities, every honeſt mind muſt feel a proper indignation. The loſs occaſioned by the deceiver, who preys on the poſſeſſions of his fellow-creatures may be repaired by ſubſequent induſtry or good fortune; but deception in this inſtance, is uſually followed by deſtruction.

How then ſhall an evil thus generally felt and complained of, be obviated, without an infringement of civil liberty; that boaſted privilege, of which we are more jealouſly tenacious than of health and life? Admonition is ineffectual; for of thoſe who ſuffer, few have not been apprized of the danger of truſting to empiriciſm.

The

The progreſs of empirical fame and ſucceſs is eaſily traced, though not eaſily retarded. A powerful medicine is exhibited to ſome wretched individual, whoſe indigence induces him to be grateful for the notice and aſſiſtance of the ignorant. If his complaint is removed, as it would otherwiſe have been by the ſilent operation of time, he is triumphantly dragged forth to public view, and his name is added to the atteſtations of the wonderful efficacy of the pretender's noſtrum. The regular practitioner is inſulted. Facts ſpeak for themſelves, and even men of ſenſe hear and believe. The gaping crowd preſs round the haughty mountebank, and ſwallow the doſe of death with avidity, led on by the ſunſhine of deluſive hope, like the poor fluttering inſect, that is allured to its own deſtruction by the blazing of a taper.

The wiſdom and authority of the legiſlature might leſſen or remove the evil. But it has never yet interfered, not only from an unwillingneſs to multiply reſtraints in a free country, but from a doubt whether

ther ſome equivalent advantage may not ariſe from the uncontrolled licence of attempting medical experiments. It is a truth ſomewhat mortifying to the regular votaries of ſcience, that many of the moſt important diſcoveries have been made by the ignorant and by chance. Thoſe who have been taught to adhere to ſyſtems are ſometimes too much attached to the ſtraight and known path, to permit themſelves to venture even on proper deviation. While the uneducated experimentaliſt, a ſtranger to the prepoſſeſſions unavoidably derived from learning, is almoſt ſure to acquire the merit of originality. Unacquainted with the paths of thoſe who have gone before, he is under a neceſſity of purſuing a track of his own. He is commonly bewildered, it is true, but yet it ſometimes happens that he finds out a ſhorter or more agreeable road. In the infinite trials which his boldneſs inſtigates him to make, he blunders on a uſeful diſcovery, which would never have been known to the more expert and cautious. Individuals ſuffer in the courſe of his inquiries, but the community is benefited by an acceſſion to experimental knowledge.

The general reliance on medicine in extreme old age, and in deſperate caſes, exhibits a ſtriking inſtance of the weakneſs of the human mind, and its proneneſs to admit the groſſeſt flattery of deluſive hope. Unwilling to part with the world and its enjoyments, even when thoſe enjoyments can no more be taſted, reluctant to reſign exiſtence even when painful and burdenſome, it depends with full confidence on an art, which though it can aſſiſt nature in the exertion of her own ſtrength, can ſeldom oppoſe her determined will, or obſtruct the regular courſe of her operations.

It was indeed natural that medicine ſhould be highly honoured, and its firſt inventors or improvers exalted to gods, and demigods. As life itſelf is of ſmall value without health, no wonder the reſtorers of health were ranked among the beſtowers of life. The profeſſion has always obtained a high rank in the ſcale of civil ſubordination, except, indeed, among the Romans. In this inſtance the moderns act more wiſely, if there is truth in the maxim that honour is the nurſe of arts.

It is however greatly to be regretted, that popular eſteem is often miſplaced, and tends to encourage preſumptuous ignorance, rather than to raiſe merit from the vale of obſcurity. Faſhion, it is allowed, has contributed more to the eſtabliſhment of many celebrated phyſicians, than any ſuperiority of knowledge that they poſſeſſed. This popularity however, has ſometimes been the cauſe of that merit, of which it ought to have been the effect. It has given men of moderate abilities and attainments, ſuch numerous and extenſive opportunities of improving by experience, as could not be obtained by the able, yet unemployed.

Let faſhion rule with abſolute ſway in her proper province, but let her not dictate in matters ſo important as the means of reſtoring health. Among phyſicians of integrity and liberal education, let her ſelect whom ſhe pleaſes; but let her not ſet aſide the votary of ſcience, and philoſophy, to aſk the advice of the needy, the illiterate, the bold empiric.

ESSAY XXXII.

ON THE MEANS OF VINDICATING OLD AGE FROM CONTEMPT.

Benignitas quidem hujus oppido ut adoleſcentuli eſt. PLAUT.

Nec turpem ſenectam degere. HOR.

IT is a melancholy conſideration that man, as he advances in life, degenerates in his nature, and gradually loſes thoſe tender feelings, which conſtitute one of his higheſt excellencies. The tear of ſenſibility, ſaid Juvenal*, is the moſt honourable characteriſtic of humanity. And the melancholy Gray has deſcribed, as he felt, all the luxury of ſympathetic ſorrow with a plaintive ſweetneſs which places the fol-

* ——— Molliſſima corda
Humano generi dare ſe natura fatetur
Quæ lachrymas dedit, hæc noſtri pars optimas ſenſus.
—— Quis enim bonus
Ulla aliena ſibi credat mala? JUV.

lowing

lowing Alcaic ſtanza, in a rank with the beſt lyric compoſitions of antient and modern times.

O lachrymarum fons* tenero ſacros
Ducentium ortus ex animo quater
Felix, ab imo qui ſcatentem
Pectore te, pia Nympha, ſentit.

Whatever real pain may ſometimes be occaſioned by ſorrowful ſenſibility, is in general counterbalanced by agreeable ſenſations, which are not the leſs ſincere and ſoothing, becauſe they do not excite that kind of joy which thoughtleſs merriment inſpires. The anguiſh of the ſympathetic heart is keen, but no leſs exalted are its gratifications. In ſpite of all that has been ſaid on the happineſs of a phlegmatic diſpoſition, every one who has formed a true eſtimate of things will deprecate it as a curſe that degrades his nature†. It is the negative happineſs of the dulleſt of quadrupeds doomed to the vileſt drudgery. Who would wiſh to be a Bœotian whoſe lot had fallen in Attica?

* This metaphor was perhaps taken from the δακρυων πηγαι of Sophocles.

† Αγαθοι αριδακρυες ανδρες.

Wretched however as is the ſtate when the heart ceaſes to feel the quick vibrations of love and pity, we are all haſtening to it by that law of our nature, which obliges us, when arrived at a certain point * of perfection, to recede with retrograde rapidity from all that gave us the power of pleaſing or receiving pleaſure. But if old age were attended only with the deprivation of amiable qualities, the loſs of ſenſibility might often be eſteemed a happineſs to the individual, as it would prevent him from feeling one of the greateſt of natural and undeſerved calamities. But the truth is, the abſence of all that is lovely, is ſometimes ſupplied by all that is odious; as in the ſeaſon of winter, the verdure and muſic of the foreſt, are not only no more, but are ſucceeded by the howling of the blaſt, and the dreary proſpect of nakedneſs and horror. Old age, though dead to pleaſing ſenſations, is alive to all that gives mental or bodily pain.

Of theſe evils part is derived from nature and is inevitable, and part from an

* Ακμη.

erroneous

erroneous conduct, which may be regulated by reaſon and philoſophy.

When the body becomes debilitated by age, languor or pain muſt neceſſarily enſue*. Bodily infirmities gradually impair the ſtrength of the mind. Uneaſy ſenſations continued for a long time ſour the native ſweetneſs of the temper. And the peeviſhneſs, the moroſeneſs, and the ſeverity which characterize the laſt ſtage of life, however diſguſtful, are to be palliated and no more deſerve to be cenſured as voluntary faults, than the aching of the joints. They are the natural reſult of mental pain, and follow from a wounded mind, no leſs ſpontaneouſly or unavoidably, than blood guſhes from the inciſion of a limb. They diſturb tranquillity and poiſon convivial enjoyment; but they ought to be patiently borne with, if not from motives of humanity, yet from the conſideration, that the day is not far diſtant, when we ſhall ſtand in need of the ſame indulgence. And we may hereafter experimentally know how † cutting to the

* Senectus ipſa morbus.

† Κερτομιοις επεεσσι. Hom.

heart are the impatient reproaches of thoſe, who are bound by the ties of conjugal, filial and domeſtic duty, to ſooth us under the preſſure of calamity, and, as the pious poet expreſſes it, to rock the cradle of declining age.

But experience proves that old age is not always attended with natural infirmity. Original ſtrength of conſtitution, or habitual temperance, often produce a green* old age. In this caſe the odious qualities uſually attributed to that period are without excuſe. Proportionate improvement ſhould be the effect of long obſervation and experience†. The vice of avarice, the characteriſtic diſtinction of the laſt ſtage of life, is then more than ever unreaſonable. It is no leſs abſurd, as it has often been ſaid, than to provide a greater quantity of ſtores, the nearer the voyage approaches to its concluſion. It

* Viridis Senectus. Juv.

† An nihil in melius tot rerum proficis uſu? Juv.

Old age, ſays Bacon, rather improves men in the powers of the underſtanding, than in the virtues of the will and affections. Œconomical Eſſays.

is alſo the ſource of every other deteſtable diſpoſition. It habituates the heart to ſuffer the ſight of woe without commiſeration; becauſe pity prompts to relieve, and relief is attended with expence. Hardneſs of heart, like all its other tendencies, is increaſed by voluntary indulgence, and he who has long diſregarded the happineſs or miſery of thoſe who were allied to him by the common tie of humanity, will ſoon become unkind among his nearer connections, cruel to his family and friends, and more cruel to himſelf.

Another diſpoſition, which cauſes the old man to be avoided by thoſe, who are moſt capable of affording him amuſement, is an unreaſonable auſterity of manners. A ſtranger to the feelings of youth, and forgetful that he once was young, he judges even the innocent ſallies of lively ſpirits, and a warm heart, by the ſevere dictates of rigid prudence. His judgment however he finds is little attended to by thoſe who are addreſſed on all ſides by a more alluring voice. He becomes impatient and querulous. He condemns every

thing

thing that is produced in the preſent times, and extols the faſhions, the diverſions, the dreſs, the manners, the learning, the taſte, that prevailed in the days of his youth, and which appeared to him ſuperior to thoſe of the preſent times, ſolely becauſe his powers of perception were then more lively and acute; the very reaſon why the preſent appear with ſuch irreſiſtible charms in the eyes of his grandſon.

For the natural evils of old age relief is to be ſought from the phyſician rather than the moraliſt. But philoſophy can aſſuage the pain which it cannot cure. It can ſuggeſt reflections which operate like balſam on the wounds of the mind. It can teach us to bear thoſe evils which it cannot remove, and by calling forth our powers of reſiſtance, enable us to * alleviate the load.

All however are not capable of receiving the benefits of philoſophy. None but thoſe whoſe underſtandings have been

* Durum; ſed levius fit patientiâ
Quicquid corrigere eſt nefas. Hor.

cultivated and affections refined by liberal education, are able to underſtand or profit by the wiſe precepts of an Epictetus or a Cicero. Of ſtill greater efficacy religion ſteps in to infuſe an ingredient into the bitter cup of life, which never fails to ſweeten it, and which is adapted to the taſte of every human creature.

Religion indeed is able of itſelf moſt effectually to diſſipate the clouds, and to diffuſe a ſunſhine on the evening of life. But to thoſe who are converſant in literature, the celebrated treatiſe of Cicero may be collaterally recommended as affording ſolid conſolation. Many moral treatiſes, however juſt and pleaſing they may appear on the peruſal, are of little uſe in the conduct of life, and terminate in ſpeculative amuſement. But the treatiſe on old age preſcribes rules, and ſuggeſts ideas, which, if permitted to influence practice, muſt render that period of life truly pleaſing and honourable. Every old man, who wiſhes to be wiſe and happy, and conſequently an object of reſpect, ſhould turn it over, as Horace adviſes the ſtudent

ſtudent to peruſe the Greek volumes, by day and night. Nor can an ignorance of the Latin language be pleaded in excuſe for the omiſſion, ſince the elegant tranſlation of Melmoth has preſerved all the meaning of the original, together with a great ſhare of its grace and ſpirit.

The indigent and the uninſtructed cannot enjoy the additional benefit of pagan wiſdom, but they have this comfort: the evangelical philoſophy is fully adequate to the cure of mental diſeaſe, and at the ſame time requires neither extraordinary abilities, nor the opportunities of learned leiſure, nor the toil of ſtudy. An attendance upon the offices of religion, and on the duties of charity, at the ſame time that it fills up the vacant hours of ſuperannuated life, with that cheerfulneſs which ever attends laudable employment, tends to inſpire ideas of patience and reſignation. A devotional taſte or ſpirit will afford the moſt lively enjoyments. The turbulent pleaſures of youth may be ſucceeded by a religious fervour; by a flame which is capable of warming the cold blood of age and

and of affording ſatisfactions ſimilar to thoſe of more youthful paſſions, without their danger or criminality.

Thus may the dignity of age be ſupported. And upon its dignity greatly depends its happineſs. It is that alone which can repel the inſolence of youth, too often inſtigated by the levity of thoughtleſs health, to forget the reverence which among the antients was thought due to the hoary head. It is really lamentable to obſerve in many families, the aged parent ſlighted and neglected, and like an old faſhioned piece of furniture, or uſeleſs lumber, thrown aſide with contempt. Such treatment is diſguſtingly unnatural, but it is not eaſily to be avoided, where there is no perſonal merit, no authority derived from ſuperior wiſdom to compenſate the want of attractive qualities. Tenderneſs and affection may be patient and aſſiduous; but who would not rather command the attention of reſpect, than excite the aid of pity? For the ſake, however, of domeſtic happineſs, it ſhould be remembered, that the authoritative air of wiſdom

wiſdom muſt be tempered with a ſweetneſs of manners; and it will be found, that the reverence which does not exclude love, is the moſt deſirable.

To preſerve the ſenſibility of youth at an advanced period is difficult, becauſe reaſon and philoſophy, it is to be feared, can contribute little to its continuance. It is a natural conſequence of decay. Much of the milk of human kindneſs, as it is often called, flows from a fine contexture of the nerves; a contexture which is broken, and a ſubtilty which is deſtroyed by duration.

Exceſs, however, precipitates the effects of time. Temperance in youth, together with the other advantages of that happy period, will protract its ſenſibility. And among the many arguments for early wiſdom, this muſt have great weight, that wiſdom in youth is uſually followed by happineſs in age.

Perhaps nothing may contribute more to prolong the amiable diſpoſitions of youth, than the retaining of a taſte for its innocent amuſements. We often grow

old

old in our ſentiments, before we are ſtricken in years. We accuſtom ourſelves to melancholy ideas of gradual decay, and before we are incapacitated for enjoyment, renounce the ſatisfaction which we might partake. Pleaſurable ideas, no leſs than painful, are caught by ſympathy. He who frequents the circles where youth and cheerfulneſs exclude every gloomy reflection, will find himſelf involuntarily inſpired with gaiety; he will forget his cares; his wrinkles will be ſmoothed; his heart dilated. And though he will not experience the effect of Medea's cauldron in the renovation of his body, he will feel his mind reſtored to its former vigour and activity. Contrary to this practice we commonly ſee the aged either retiring to ſolitude, or frequenting the company of thoſe who can only increaſe their mutual miſery by the contagion of complaint.

The books we read in age will have a great influence on the temper as well as on the conduct and the underſtanding. After a certain period, many of us, from motives

motives of miſtaken propriety, cloſe our books of entertainment, and peruſe nothing but thoſe ſerious treatiſes, which, however proper at certain times, when peruſed without variety, induce a ſettled melancholy, rather than a principled wiſdom. Why ſhould the imagination, that fertile ſource of all that is delightful, be left uncultivated at a time when pleaſures become moſt deficient? Why ſhould the works of a Horace, a Virgil, a Homer, be laid aſide for the meditations of a Seneca, and Antoninus? The judicious mixture of books addreſſed to the fancy with thoſe which enlighten the underſtanding, would increaſe the effect of both, at the ſame time that it would contribute to health and happineſs by affording lively pleaſure.

Horace wiſhed that he might not ſpend his old age without his lyre. Muſic is, indeed, a ſweet companion in every ſtage of life, but to the laſt it is peculiarly adapted. It furniſhes employment without painful exertion, and while it charms the ſenſe, ſooths the heart.

ESSAY XXXIII.

ON RIDICULE, AS A TEST OF TRUTH IN COMMON LIFE.

HORACE once happened to ſay with an air of levity, that ridicule was more efficacious in deciding diſputes of importance, than all the ſeverity of argument. Shafteſbury caught the idea, improved upon it, and advanced the doctrine, that ridicule is the teſt of truth. All thoſe who poſſeſſed one characteriſtic of man, in great perfection, RISIBILITY, but who were ſlenderly furniſhed with the other, rationality, adopted the opinion with eagerneſs; for though to reaſon was difficult, to grin was eaſy.

The admirers of the graces were glad of ſo pleaſing a method of philoſophizing, and ſeized on it without examination. They who admitted it, were under a neceſſity of ſmiling; and to ſmile, if not to laugh, was allowed by the great

legiſlator of decorum, to be becoming. Beſides, Shafteſbury recommended it; it could not fail of being faſhionable, for Shafteſbury was a lord.

The ſpeculative opinions of ſtudious men, however erroneous, often afford them innocent amuſement in their cloſets, without diffuſing any malignant influence on the manners or happineſs of others. However intereſting to the philoſopher may be the diſputes concerning liberty and neceſſity, or the nature of good and evil, they attract not the regard of thoſe who are agitated in the buſy walk of life, by the common purſuits of intereſt and pleaſure. The metaphyſician thinks his labours of great importance to the happineſs of mankind, and would be not a little mortified to find that in the great numbers who compoſe the community to which he belongs, and for whoſe more immediate edification he conſumes the midnight oil, a very ſmall part knows that there ever exiſted ſuch men as Berkeley, or Hume; and that, if they knew, and could underſtand their works, they would pre-

fer the opportunity of earning a penny, to all the advantage that ever could be derived from a conviction that matter exiſted not, or that the old principles of morals were erroneous.

But though this may be true of thoſe doctrinal opinions which are too abſtracted for vulgar apprehenſion, yet it will be found that there are ſpeculative notions, which, as they require no great improvement of underſtanding to be comprehended, are adopted as axioms as ſoon as propoſed, and permitted to influence the conduct of life. He who is a convert to materialiſm, a doctrine of late unhappily recommended by virtuous and well-meaning writers, will certainly loſe ſome reſtraints which operated favourably on his morals. It is true, the writer who thus gives it all the recommendation his ſubtlety can ſupply, though he ſpeaks the dictates of conviction, is perhaps not apparently corrupted. But a reaſonable cauſe may be aſſigned for his eſcaping the effect of the poiſon which he bears about him. He is probably a man of letters; leads a

life remote from violent temptations; has acquired habits of virtue; and, perhaps, from the practice of reaſoning and diſputation, can maintain or explode opinions which concern the moſt important intereſts of his fellow-creatures, with all the indifference of a by-ſtander. But his opinions are plauſibly ſupported; they are pleaſing to the lover of novelty; they afford ſolid conſolation to the vicious, and they are read by thoſe who want a ſanction for flagitious conduct, who wiſh to be furniſhed with arguments to make proſelytes to vice, and who are deſirous of ſilencing the voice of conſcience even by the fallacies of ſophiſtry. They are read by the young and the gay, as a ſyſtem of philoſophy newly diſcovered, which far * ſurpaſſes the antiquated doctrines of the received moraliſt, and as favourable to thoſe ideas, which they gladly indulge, concerning the expediency of unlimited indulgence.

* ——— Qualia vincunt
Pythagoran Anytique reum doctumque Platona.
HOR.

That

That ridicule is an infallible criterion of truth, is an opinion, from its peculiar correſpondency to the taſte of the greater part of mankind, much more prevalent, and therefore more detrimental in the common intercourſe of life. Men deſtitute of delicacy, and that ſolid merit which is uſually accompanied with diffidence, often riſe to the higheſt eminence, acquire the largeſt fortunes, fill the moſt important offices, and give law to the ſentiments as well as practice of others. Theſe, judging from themſelves, have no adequate idea of the dignity of human nature, and the comparative perfection of which it is capable. They perhaps have been uniformly vicious; yet have had the temporal reward of virtue; they have been ignorant, yet have been admired for their wiſdom; they have deſpiſed all the precepts of moral philoſophy, and by dint of that effrontery which natural want of feeling inſpires, have raiſed themſelves to fame and fortune. Bold through the natural preſumption of ignorance, and ſtill farther elated by ſucceſs, by the flattery, by the attentions which

paid to the moſt undeſerving proſperity, they laugh at all the ſerious part of the world who are defrauding their genius, as it is called, in the rigid ſervitude of a fanciful virtue.

Rank, fortune, and ſpirit without the leaſt portion of learning and philoſophy, are at any time able to raiſe a multitude of admirers and to eſtabliſh a faſhion. When men therefore, with very few other recommendations than the abſence of modeſty, become the leaders of a nation, a taſte for RIDICULE, or in other words, a malicious deſire of levelling the exalted nature of even indigent virtue, to the ſtandard of worthleſs grandeur, will become generally prevalent. This taſte which tends to vilify all that can adorn and ennoble a human creature, has been too common in every long eſtabliſhed and corrupted community. He muſt have remarked but little who has not ſeen its baneful influence in our own times and country. All the cardinal virtues, if the efforts of certain groſs ſpirits could prevail, would be laughed out of countenance,

nance, and no ſemblance of them be left amongſt us but the unſubſtantial imitating phantom, MODERN HONOUR.

Let us trace the progreſs of ſome ingenuous youth, emerging from an uncorrupted ſeminary to his ſtation in the active world. In the retirements of ſtudy he has formed advantageous ideas of that life on which he is now to enter. His heart glows with virtuous and benevolent purpoſes. He has been reading of thoſe legiſlators, heroes, philoſophers, patriots, who ſhine with luſtre in the page of hiſtory, and who derived all their glorious ſplendour from their virtue. He longs to emulate them. He values himſelf little on his birth or fortune, if he has them, but owns he feels a conſcious dignity ariſing from his acquirements, his learning, his comprehenſive views, his liberal and diſintereſted intentions. He loves fame, and hopes to acquire by deſerving it.

Thus principled, ſuppoſe him introduced, where his fortune leads him, among the antient nobles of the land; the hereditary or the elected lawgivers of his coun-

try, aſſembled at their uſual places of reſort, a cockpit, a horſe-race, a chocolate houſe, or a watering place. He is ſtruck dumb with aſtoniſhment. He finds he has hitherto dwelt on fairy ground where all was enchantment. The fancied ſcene is vaniſhed. He feels himſelf awkward. His accompliſhments are either not underſtood, not valued, or have no opportunities of diſplay. At firſt he is coldly neglected; when perſonal acquaintance has taken place, he is conſidered as a novice, greatly to be pitied for his ſimplicity, but who may improve in time. Some kind inſtructor undertakes the office, and employs RIDICULE, as the moſt efficacious method of ſucceeding in it. He finds it neceſſary to ſubmit to ſuch initiation, before he can be admitted upon equal terms. He yields; though not without a ſigh of regret to think that he muſt diveſt himſelf of all thoſe ſentiments, which he once hoped would raiſe him to the rank of the worthies he admired in books, and cannot help lamenting that he muſt even ſtudy degeneracy. Self-abaſement is an

eaſy

eaſy taſk. He deſcends from the invidious height of virtue, and is received with pleaſure by his relenting companions. In his turn he learns to deſpiſe what he once admired, and contributes by his advice and example to ſtrengthen the formidable * Phalanx. He becomes perhaps what is commonly called a wit, that is, a joker, a buffoon, a ſatyriſt, a man of the world, and perhaps is really ſo much degraded by contagion, as to judge theſe characters more valuable than that of the ſcholar and philoſopher. He is no longer the man of virtue, but he is the man of faſhion.

All the uſeful and amiable qualities, which ſweeten private and domeſtic life, have occaſionally been put out of countenance by the prevalence of the doctrine, that ridicule is the teſt of truth. Conjugal attachment and fidelity, filial regard, regular induſtry, prudent œconomy, ſincerity in friendſhip, delicate ſcruples, benevolence and beneficence have been

* Defendit numerus junctæque umbone Phalanges. Juv.

deſtroyed

deſtroyed by the pretender to wit, who, from the malignant feelings of envy, has been prompted to beſtow on them ſome ſiniſter appellation.

The effect of ridicule is often very powerful among the young and inexperienced. It is a remark often made, that the man is found to degenerate from the excellence which diſtinguiſhed him * when a boy. Inſtances are frequent of thoſe who, though they were the boaſt of their ſchool, appear with no ſuperiority of merit, when they are advanced to higher ſeminaries, or introduced into the world. To ridicule they frequently owe their degradation. Their preheminence excites the envy of their contemporaries, who naturally endeavour to obſcure that luſtre, which † burns them with its blaze. They value themſelves on thoſe talents or acquiſitions, of the worth of which their companions have no adequate conception. They are received with contempt. Their remarks are attended to with a ſneer, and their ſo-

* —— Diſſimiles hic puer et ille vir. OVID.

† Urit enim fulgore ſuo qui prægravat.— HOR.

lemnity

lemnity is the ſubject of laughter. A nickname is appropriated to them. They are ſhunned, as involving their companions in their own abſurdity and conſequent diſgrace. This laſt is more than they can bear. They lay aſide the appearance of emulation and the reality ſoon follows. They ſtudiouſly unlearn all that rendered them truly valuable, and when they have debaſed themſelves to a certain pitch, they are received with open arms, and are united with their company by the ſtrong aſſimilation of congenial natures.

Genius, virtue, learning, are often diſtinguiſhed by a delicacy of mind which wears the appearance and produces the effects of infirmity. They are eaſily overruled, if not convinced, by the noiſy antagoniſt, who makes up in clamour what he wants in argument, and gains the victory by dint of leathern lungs and nerves of iron. A horſe-laugh ſet up by a circle of fox-hunters, would overpower the beſt poet or philoſopher whom the world ever admired. The modeſt Virgil* could not

* ——— Minus aptus acutis
Naribus horum hominum. HOR.

ſtand

ſtand the attacks of ſcoffing ridicule; and wiſdom has ever ſought the ſhade where the impertinence of the great or little vulgar ſeldom intruded. Cruel as it is to diſtreſs ſenſibility, and injurious to mankind to render worth contemptible, we often obſerve perſons of character joining in the laugh againſt modeſty and merit. In the moment of ſocial enjoyment, we do not give ourſelves time to reflect on the conſequence of our mirth, and with the kindeſt intentions of promoting convivial happineſs, we often hurt the feelings and intereſts of individuals, as well as the moſt important ends of ſociety.

From the deſire of furniſhing matter for converſation and ſupporting its vivacity, ſome evils ariſe, which at firſt view appear to proceed from malignant cauſes. The tale of ſcandal, though uſually ſuppoſed to be the genuine effect of malevolence, is often produced by thoughtleſs levity, and an unwillingneſs to ſit in company without ſupplying a ſhare of entertainment. The raillery, which is ſometimes played off with ſucceſs by the ſhalloweſt yet boldeſt of the company, againſt the only

only perſons of real merit in it, is not always the reſult of a detracting ſpirit, but of a fondneſs for coarſe mirth, and an inability to let ſlip thoſe opportunities for indulging it, which genius and learning, from an unavoidable inattention to trifling accompliſhments, frequently ſupply.

To be cheerful is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the mutual participation of the pleaſures of ſocial intercourſe. To be merry, if it is often deſirable, is not always neceſſary. Let mirth however be uncontrouled, while it is tempered with the wiſdom not to hurt thoſe who deſerve careſſes and reward; and not to ſully the dignity of unfeigned virtue by the wanton ſallies of buffoonery.

ESSAY XXXIV.

ON PLINY THE YOUNGER.

THE character of PLINY the younger, in whatever light it is viewed, is pleaſing. The elegance of his writings reſulted from the habitual elegance of his mind. Conſidered as a man of letters, and a man of the world, he may be ſaid, more than any of the antients, to deſerve the epithet of *All-Accompliſhed.*

It has indeed been objected, that his letters are too elaborate. Eaſe, the characteriſtic of the epiſtolary ſtyle, is ſaid to be ſacrificed to ſtudied ornament: but it ſhould be remembered by the cenſurers of Pliny, that there are beauties of art, as well as of nature: and that art, even when miſplaced, may produce an agreeable work, as nature may bring forth ſomething anomalous, which, though termed a monſter by the naturaliſts, may yet be beautiful. The peruſal of Pliny's letters excites a pleaſure ſimilar to that which ariſes from a view of an elegant parterre,

parterre, rather than to that which is derived from the ruder beauties of uncultivated nature.

Pliny is among thoſe few antient authors, who have been tranſlated into Engliſh without loſing much of their original grace. Lord Orrery and Mr. Melmoth ſeem to have reſembled him in their manners, as well as in their ſtyle. The taſk was natural to them, for while they expreſſed their author's idea, they appear to have expreſſed their own. Both the tranſlations have uncommon merit; and if a preference be given to Melmoth's, it muſt at the ſame time be acknowledged, that a very great ſhare of praiſe is due to that of Lord Orrery.

The panegyric of Trajan has, like the epiſtles, been cenſured as ſtiff, laboured, and affected: but if the beauties of the compoſition can excuſe the appearance of labour in the epiſtles, with much greater reaſon ought they to juſtify it in a formal oration. At an advanced period of literature, when taſte becomes too capricious and depraved to endure the graces of nature and ſimplicity, there is no reſource

ſource left for an author who would acquire popularity, but to labour in the invention of ingenious thoughts, and in beſtowing on his productions the niceſt poliſh of art. Panegyrical pieces of eloquence are commonly of all others the moſt difficult, becauſe their ſubjects are commonly of all others the moſt barren. What may be ſaid in praiſe of any man, may uſually be comprehended in few words, if naked truth only and unembelliſhed facts are repreſented. Whenever, therefore, it is required, by the ceremonies of a public ſolemnity, to expatiate on the virtues of particular perſons, the orator ſoon finds himſelf under a neceſſity of ſupplying the deficiency of matter, by ingenious turns and laboured ornaments.

The compoſitions of Pliny are not likely to pleaſe the illiterate or ſuperficial. Sounding periods, and animated expreſſions, are required by the vulgar reader, rather than the leſs obvious beauties of correctneſs and refinement. The paſſions and the imagination of thoſe, whoſe intellects and judgment are weak, are often

ſtrong

ſtrong and lively. Their mental appetite, like their corporeal, unaccuſtomed to delicacy, learns to prefer coarſe viands to the dainties of luxury. An uncultivated mind perhaps feels, at leaſt an equal pleaſure from the rude ballad of an itinerant ſinger, with that which ariſes to an improved taſte from the poliſhed pieces of a Horace, or an Anacreon. It is, therefore, no derogation from the merits of Pliny, that he is not admired by every reader. His elegance is too ſubtle and refined for the vulgar eye.

Though great genius may be diſplayed in hewing even a rough ſtatue, or in ſketching an imperfect picture; yet will the judicious connoiſſeur always feel a pleaſure in examining thoſe works of ſculpture or painting which have received the higheſt poliſh, and have been finiſhed with the niceſt traits of the pencil. Such writers as Homer and Shakeſpeare I muſt admire with all their imperfections on their heads; but yet, as imperfections are not of themſelves laudable, it is ſurely conſiſtent with reaſon to admire thoſe alſo,

who, like Pliny, are even painfully ſolicitous to avoid them. Longinus, with all the ardour of genius, prefers faulty eminence, to faultleſs mediocrity; but yet neither he, nor any other ſenſible critic has pronounced correctneſs a fault.

It is poſſible that the judgment may approve, while the heart and imagination remain unaffected. But we read to be moved, to be entertained, to be delighted. Mere approbation is a frigid ſentiment. An animated work, therefore, which excites warm emotions attended even with occaſional diſguſt, is read in preference to another, which is inſipid, though correct, and dull, though judicious. But where genius is united with correct taſte, the judgment, the heart, and the imagination are at once fully ſatisfied. Such a combination exiſted in the minds of Pliny and Addiſon.

ESSAY XXXV.

ON INCONSTANCY.

A Fickle conduct is always an object of ridicule and contempt. The reaſon is, that it argues a conſciouſneſs of the impropriety of our deſigns and actions when we relinquiſh them as ſoon as formed, or neglect them before they are finiſhed. A man who appears without ſufficient reaſon to condemn his own conduct, will be ſure to be condemned by others. Conſtancy, reſolution, and ſpirit, even in a bad cauſe, ſeem to teſtify a conviction of rectitude, and induce others to imagine, that there is a poſſibility of his being right, who ſeems clearly convinced that he is not wrong. We are naturally diſpoſed to admire fortitude, from our natural want of protection. We naturally ſeparate from timidity, becauſe it only increaſes the general weakneſs of mankind; and, indeed, excluſively of all conſideration of our own advantage or infirmities, the appearance of courage and reſolution has in

it ſomething captivating, which often, in contradiction to reaſon, excites our wonder and approbation.

But there are thoſe who can deſpiſe the opinion of the world, if that were the only inconvenience ariſing from INCONSTANCY; but, in truth, it not only incurs the imputation of extreme folly, but produces all the conſequences of it: for, however excellent the natural faculties of the mind may be, if they do not operate uniformly and conſiſtently, they will not differ in their effects from mental weakneſs. To the ſucceſs of any rational deſign, rational means are neceſſary. No height of perfection can be reached, without a regular progreſſion of intermediate ſteps. Cauſe and effect are conſtantly allied in morals, as well as in phyſics. He, therefore, who begins without continuation, who ſeizes on the middle without attending to the preceding extreme, who expects the conſequence without the cauſe, muſt be diſappointed in every deſign, however rationally adopted. With the powers of reaſon, and with juſt pretenſions to prudence,

dence, he must resign the event of his undertakings to the intervention of chance, a deity said to have been originally made and adored only by folly.

The preservation of constancy, as it is allowed to be expedient, must likewise be granted to be difficult. After a rational end is proposed, and proper means concerted for its attainment, a thousand external accidents obstruct, a thousand internal weaknesses retard the completion. When an undertaking is new, all is hope, alacrity, and pleasure: but the grace of novelty is transitory. Sanguine expectations and glowing ardour, soon give place to steady toil and cool perseverance. The mind, disappointed at finding pain where pleasure only was expected, relinquishes its pursuit for a new one, where it feels a repetition of the pleasure of novelty, and the disgust of satiety.

It has ever been the boast of the moralist, that man is possessed of reason; a guide which can direct him with certainty through the labyrinths of doubt; which can penetrate into futurity, and gather wisdom from the past: yet, whatever

cauſe there may be to boaſt, that human nature is endowed with ſuch a faculty; there is no leſs reaſon to lament, that its operation is almoſt univerſally impeded, or perverted by prejudice and paſſion. Even they who can diſcourſe with all the dignity of philoſophy, on the advantages of regulating the paſſions, are often influenced in their conduct by humour and caprice. It has even been aſſerted, that every man is the man of the day, that he is governed by preſent circumſtances and ſituations, and that he is entirely uninfluenced by ſettled plans and permanent principles. Hunger or repletion, the ſlighteſt indiſpoſition of body, or emotion of mind, will unhinge the temper of the philoſopher, and make him reſemble the childiſh changeling, or the peeviſh dotard.

But let not a fault be imputed to nature which ariſes from inattention. The hiſtory of philoſophy evinces, that there have been men who have perſevered in a conduct founded on principle, without the ſmalleſt deviation. The ſtoics reſolution was neither ſhaken by the ſtrong allurements of pleaſure, nor the real ſufferings of adverſity. Perhaps the more rational

of that ſect did not really pretend to deſpiſe bodily pain, but it is certain they were inſenſible to the ſevereſt attacks on the mind. What was done by ſtoics may be done by other men; ſince it is certain, that other men poſſeſs the faculties of the mind, and the qualities of the heart, in a ſtate equal to theirs. They were not naturally a ſuperior ſpecies, but they appeared to be ſuch; becauſe they acted up to that dignity of human nature, of which others ſcarcely had a conception.

Fickleneſs is much increaſed by the effeminacy of modern manners. Refinements in morals and behaviour, though they add a delicacy, commonly ſuperinduce a weakneſs. The faſtidiouſneſs of refined taſte immediately relinquiſhes its object, upon the diſcovery of the ſmalleſt defect. It muſt, therefore, be wiſhed by every friend to mankind, that while we cultivate elegance and refinement, we may not acquire ſuch a ſenſibility of diſguſtful objects, as to become incapable of performing the duties of common life with that manly conſtancy, which can alone obtain ſucceſs, and deſerve reputation.

ESSAY XXXVI.

To Amicus.

REMARKS ON SOME PASSAGES IN TACITUS.

EVER happy to comply with the requeſt of my friend, I tranſmit with pleaſure the few curſory remarks in which we coincided at our laſt meeting, as we happened to turn over the leaves of an author that accidentally lay upon my table.

The mention of circumſtances inconſiderable in themſelves, gives great force and beauty to a deſcription. Tacitus in relating the murder of Agrippina, the mother of Nero, after giving an account of the manner in which the ruffians entered her chamber, adds—" *Cubiculo modicum* " *lumen inerat, et ancillarum una.*"—Upon reading this, the mind immediately ſees a lively picture of the whole ſcene, and is more ſtrongly affected by it, than by any other part of the deſcription. The *modicum*

dicum lumen is the kind of light in which the imagination ſees moſt clearly.

Tacitus, indeed, abounds with beauties; but the paſſages at the concluſion of the life of Agricola, are uncommonly excellent. They do as much honour to his heart, as to his genius. That beautiful apoſtrophe, "*Tu vero, felix Agricola*, &c." has a fine effect on the reader, and evinces, that this figure is as graceful, on proper occaſions, in proſe as in poetry. From theſe words to the end, there is a tenderneſs which ſooths the heart with a pleaſing melancholy. The whole is a fine model for funeral ſermons or orations.

The antients appear not to have had an idea of the indelicacy of praiſing one's-ſelf. Not to mention Cicero, who, as every one knows, omits no opportunity of laviſhing the moſt extravagant encomiums on his own merits; the ſenſible, the philoſophic Seneca pays himſelf a compliment in his dying words, for which a modern, however great and illuſtrious, would be ridiculed. When his executioners refuſed him permiſſion to write a will,

will, Tacitus informs us, that he addreſſed his companions to this purpoſe: "*Quando meritis eorum referre gratiam* "*prohiberetur, quod unum jam tamen et* "pulcherrimum *habebat, imaginem vitæ* "*ſuæ relinquere teſtatur, cujus ſi memores* "*eſſent, bonarum artium famam, tum con-*"*ſtantis amicitiæ laturos.*"

The hiſtorians of antiquity excelled the moderns in drawing characters. At leaſt, the characters in their writings give us more pleaſure, and excite more admiration: but this may be attributed to the intrinſic merit of the perſonages deſcribed, and not merely to the ſuperior excellence of the hiſtorians. Heroic virtue is the fineſt topic for panegyric, but heroic virtue, from the nature of our political inſtitutions, cannot appear ſo frequently among us, as among the Greeks and Romans. Tacitus, however, excels not only in theſe elevated characters, but alſo in the domeſtic and leſs diſtinguiſhed. He exhibits here and there a maſter-ſtroke, which proves him to have been perfectly acquainted with the human heart under

all

all circumſtances, and in all ſituations. The character of Galba is ſtrikingly beautiful. How elegantly it concludes, "*Major privato viſus dum privatus et omnium* "*conſenſu capax imperii niſi imperâſſet.*"

Salluſt, likewiſe, abounds with ſuch ſhort characters accurately drawn, and highly finiſhed. Thoſe of Cato and Cæſar are of this kind, and would alone obtain for their author greater fame, than whole tomes of dull, unintereſting, though faithful and authentic, narration.

But though Tacitus, like Machiavel, may be admired as a writer, he muſt be reprobated as a moraliſt. His portraits are all caricaturas. A corrupt heart is no leſs viſible in their delineation, than a maſterly hand. By vilifying human nature, he has contributed to its depravity. Man, once taught to think meanly of himſelf, will ſoon juſtify his own opinion.

ESSAY XXXVII.

ON THE BAD CONSEQUENCES OF NATIONAL PARSIMONY.

THERE have been thoſe who have ſeriouſly maintained, that AVARICE, however it may debaſe the character and contract the notions of individuals, is beneficial to the community. That private vices of any kind are public benefits, is an opinion ſo injurious to the cauſe of virtue, that though it ſhould be admitted by the ſpeculative politician, it were to be wiſhed, that it could always be refuted by the defenders of morality.

Avarice, however, differs in its operation from other vices. To individuals it is ſaid to be advantageous, as it prevents the indulgence of luxurious appetites. To the public it is hurtful, becauſe it confines, in a ſtate of ſtagnation, that money which ſhould circulate in the body politic, and diffuſe health and vigour through every part.

The parſimonious man approaches ſo nearly to a ſtate of nature, that beſides food

food and raiment, he ſcarcely knows a want. Of the elegances, the embelliſhments, and the enjoyments of life, he has no deſire, becauſe they are neceſſarily attended with expence. The mere wants of nature are eaſily ſupplied by the natural productions of a country, and with theſe the miſer is contented. He, therefore contributes nothing to foreign trade, which ſupplies not only the ſuperfluities of life, but is the moſt fertile ſource of public opulence.

The merchant does not penetrate to the remoteſt Indies to bring home commodities which clothe the naked, or feed the hungry; but which furniſh ſplendour, eaſe, and pleaſure to the wealthy, the voluptuous, and the luxurious. Theſe articles may, perhaps, deſtroy the health, debilitate the minds, and corrupt the morals of individuals; but they increaſe the finances of the ſtate, and give it power in war, and dignity in peace.

A viſionary philoſopher, as he would be called by the ſtateſman, may perhaps object to the opinion, that luxury is beneficial

ficial to the public, becauſe it is hurtful to individuals, who, indeed, conſtitute the community, and becauſe the happineſs of individuals conſidered in the aggregate ought to be the ultimate view of rational government: but let it be remembered, that we do not live in an Utopia, and that if we would avoid empty ſpeculation, we muſt form our ideas, as well as regulate our actions as far as virtue will permit, according to received notions and prevalent manners. It is indeed to be wiſhed, that we could emulate the excellence of a Spartan Republic; but ſince this can only be wiſhed, it remains that we make the beſt uſe of things as they are, and adapt our plans to preſent circumſtances and ſituations. Beſides, by the benefits accruing to a ſtate from luxury, muſt be underſtood the benefits accruing to its finances, its power, its ſplendour, and not to its morals, its virtues, and its police. Nothing, therefore, advanced on this ſubject muſt be thought to recommend intemperance and profuſion. We only ſpeculate upon it without wiſhing to influence practice.

In

In all civilized countries, where progreſſive refinement continually introduces unneceſſary wants, there will ever be a great number of artificers who are ſolely ſupported by furniſhing articles, which, though ſought for with avidity, and purchaſed at a great price, adminiſter only to the caprice of luxury, and the wantonneſs of pleaſure. The manufacturer thrives, he rears a family, he teaches them his art; till at length, theſe artificers of ſuperfluity become one of the moſt numerous bodies in the community. Should the demand for their manufactures ceaſe, thouſands would be immediately reduced to extreme want, and the ſtate overrun with members not only uſeleſs, but burthenſome. Whenever the gold and diamond, which adorn the gay and the fair, ſhall be no longer prized, and the rich garment laid aſide for the homely cloak, myriads of hands, which by honeſt labour procured bread for a numerous progeny, will be lifted up in ſupplication for eleemoſynary relief. To other occupations they could not turn themſelves, becauſe

cauſe many of them would become equally unneceſſary, and becauſe thoſe which ſhould not be ſo, would be already full.

The trueſt opulence of a nation is populouſneſs; but the poor will not be induced to ſettle in domeſtic life, and raiſe a numerous family, whom they know they cannot ſupport by induſtry, but muſt ſee become objects of charity, or periſh for want of that little which ſimple nature requires. Marriage, which in a civil, moral, and religious view, is the moſt advantageous and proper intercourſe of the ſexes, will no longer be entered upon by the lower orders of the community. The concupiſcible paſſions will, however, remain importunate for gratification, and illicit commerce will be the natural conſequence: but the diſeaſes and infirmities ariſing from univerſal debauchery, will ultimately put an effectual ſtop to population. The offspring of promiſcuous embraces will not only be inconſiderable, but, in the end, weak, ſickly, deformed and ſhort-lived.

National

National profuſion, it may be ſaid, occaſions evils no leſs deſtructive among the rich and great, than national Avarice inflicts on the poor: but the rich and great are by far the leaſt numerous part of the ſtate; and ſome have ventured to aſſert, that their total extinction might be ſupplied, without inconvenience, by the lower orders. Add to this, that the opulent have it in their power to be prudently luxurious, and to indulge in the gratifications of profuſion, without ſuffering all its conſequences. If they do ſuffer from it, they may be ſaid to deſerve their ſufferings, ſince they might avoid them by caution and diſcretion: but this cannot be true of the evils which the poor would ſuſtain from national Avarice, for they would be as unavoidable as unalleviated.

The wants of luxury ſtimulate to action, and excite induſtry; while the wants of nature, from their paucity and the facility of ſupplying them, ſuffer the powers both of mind and body to ſink into torpidity. If we take a view of ſome neighbouring nations, the peculiarity of

whoſe political conſtitutions occaſions a general poverty among the lower ranks, and conſequently prohibits an univerſal luxury, we ſhall find the greater part dragging a liſtleſs life of indolence, without a wiſh for diſtinction, or a deſire of meliorating their condition.

Thoſe countries of Turkey which conſtituted antient Greece, exhibit a melancholy proof of the extreme degeneracy to which human nature may be reduced, when precluded, by ſlavery and want, from liberal merchandize and its conſequences, expenſive and luxurious pleaſures. It cannot be ſuppoſed, that the univerſal ſtupidity and want of ſpirit, which is remarkable among thoſe people, proceeds from an inferiority of natural powers, but from an habitual indolence. Nor can this indolence be attributed to any other cauſe than to a want of proper objects to excite the paſſions of hope and fear, thoſe neceſſary incentives to every laudable purſuit and uſeful undertaking: and theſe proper objects can alone ariſe from univerſal liberty, and univerſal luxu-

ry.

ty. It is well known to thoſe who are acquainted with modern hiſtory, that the little republic of Holland, however circumſcribed in its extent, and, comparatively with the oriental nations, thinly inhabited, has produced greater men, has been more ſucceſsful in war, and has accumulated more real wealth, than the whole Ottoman empire. Nor can ſuch an event be made matter of wonder to thoſe who reflect, that in Holland, a ſpirit of merchandize, univerſally prevalent, has excited a ſpirit of luxury, ſtill prompting the unwearied adventurer to new efforts, which, in the end, enrich himſelf and aggrandize his country.

Upon a review of antient Rome, we obſerve, that ſhe was indeed virtuous, valiant, and wiſe, under conſuls who were taken from the plough; but that ſhe was opulent, invincible, and in ſhort, miſtreſs of the world, under thoſe who would not heſitate to ſquander the produce of a province upon a ſupper, or to laviſh the revenues of a kingdom upon a concubine. It was at this period, that ſhe excelled

in arts, a world which ſhe had conquered by arms. Had ſhe conſtantly perſevered in her priſtine temperance, ſhe might, indeed, have excited the admiration of philoſophers, and her inhabitants as individuals would have been happier; but ſhe would never have ſurpaſſed all other nations in power and wealth, thoſe political advantages, which are on the preſent occaſion to be conſidered independently of the happineſs of ſingle members, and as unconnected with morality: but it muſt not be left unnoticed, that the luxury and extravagance which contributed to her aggrandizement, did at laſt, by the corruption of individuals, occaſion her downfal.

A Solon, or a Lycurgus, may invent in his retirement a code of laws, and a ſyſtem of government, in which intemperance and profuſion ſhall be prohibited; but if he expects that a ſtrict obſervance of his inſtitutions will render his Republic ſuperior to its rivals in wealth, as well as virtue, he will infallibly be diſappointed. The two Grecian ſtates, of which theſe great men were the legiſlators, though one

one of them became unrivalled in military diſcipline and auſtere virtue, and the other produced the greateſt heroes, poets, and philoſophers, the world ever knew, were never diſtinguiſhed by the extent of their territories, or the abundance of their revenues. Perſia, where luxury was carried to the extreme, and where even the names of the virtues of temperance and moderation were almoſt unknown, not only ſurpaſſed Athens and Sparta in power, but conquered the world. Effeminate as the Perſians were from the warmth of their climate, and the delicacy of their manners; yet did their love of pleaſure, and the ſpirit of luxury, occaſion ſuch a multiplication of the members of that ſtate, as enabled it to ſend myriads into the field, and ſometimes to overcome, by mere ſuperiority of number, the efforts of ingenuity and valour. Greece, however, relaxed the ſeverity of her manners, and, under the conduct of a Macedonian, eaſily ſubdued the oriental nations, whom ſhe greatly excelled in military diſcipline and conduct.

If after the contemplation of foreign States, we turn our attention to our native country, we ſhall find reaſon to conjecture, that the power and opulence, by which it at preſent rivals antient Rome, would ſoon dwindle to poverty and inſignificance, if ſumptuary laws were to preclude that luxury and extravagance which prevail through every rank of the community. The produce of the Indies, which pours in an annual tide of wealth, as it conſiſts entirely of ſuperfluities, could indeed eaſily be diſpenſed with. Individuals would, perhaps, in time, be happier without them; but the body politic, as it now is conſtituted, would ſoon ſhew ſymptoms of a haſty conſumption.

When however we conſider the ſubject not as modern politicians, but as moraliſts, we muſt reprobate luxury in the ſtrongeſt terms as the bane of all that is good and truly great. And alas! what avail our rivers crowded with ſhips and our warehouſes with ſtore, if our minds and bodies are weakened and corrupted by our wealth? How little ſhall we profit if we gain the whole world and loſe our health, our ſenſe, our virtue, ourſelves?

ESSAY XXXVIII.

ON HARMONY OF PERIOD.

THE laborious antiquary, and the dull compiler, are commonly contented with a book, however unadorned and unintereſting, if it affords information. The flowers of rhetoric they deſpiſe as meretricious artifices; and the graces of ſtyle they neglect as contributing more to embelliſhment than to ſolidity.

But the majority of readers are neither able nor deſirous to overcome that propenſity to be pleaſed, which they derive from nature. Beſides an underſtanding to conceive, an imagination to invent, and a memory to retain, they have an ear finely ſuſceptible of all the muſic of modulated periods. Compoſitions not addreſſed to the latter as well as to the former of theſe faculties, they may reject as defective. The fineſt reaſoning, and the moſt animated oratory, are attended to with diſguſt, when accompanied with diſcord. Intrinſic merit may excite approbation, but external

ornament is neceſſary to give pleaſure. An accurate ſyſtem, or a well authenticated hiſtory, however rugged the ſtyle, is valuable as a collection of materials; but cannot claim the title of a perfect compoſition, till it is poliſhed to ſuch a degree of ſmoothneſs as the ſpecies of writing ſeems to require.

In the rude ages of literature, the mind acquieſces in ſolid ſenſe expreſſed in unharmonious diction. An Ennius among the Romans, and a Shakeſpeare among the moderns, is admired for juſtneſs and ſublimity of conception, though the ſtyle be rugged and diſcordant. The novelty of the firſt literary productions cauſes ſo ſtrong a pleaſure in the reader's mind, that he can perceive nothing wanting to complete his ſatisfaction. His ear is unaccuſtomed to tuneful meaſures, and for want of better examples, feels a pleaſure ariſing from the harſheſt numbers. Thus the vulgar liſten with delight to the bawling notes of an itinerant ſinger; while the refined ear of a connoiſſeur in muſic muſt be ſoothed with the ſoft warbling of an Italian.

But

But ſucceeding writers find it neceſſary, if they hope for readers, to adopt graces unknown to their predeceſſors. They find it difficult to add novelty to the matter, becauſe, in the courſe of a few ages, every ſubject is frequently treated, and conſequently ſoon exhauſted. Syſtematical writings muſt from their nature contain nearly the ſame thoughts, connected in a ſimilar manner. In all kinds of compoſition which, either from their particular nature, or from their having been before diſcuſſed, admit not of invention, if novelty is neceſſary, it muſt be ſought for in the ſtyle, rather than in the matter. An author who cannot add any thing new to the philoſophy of a Bacon or a Newton, may yet deliver their thoughts in ſuch a manner, may ſmooth their roughneſſes, and refine their beauties with ſuch ornaments of diction, that his work may be more read than thoſe of the inventors, from whom it was derived. Fontenelle and Le Pluche are univerſally ſtudied, while the ſources from which they drew, the works of Bacon and Boyle, are left a

prey to moths and worms in ſome deſerted library.

The books which have united delight with inſtruction, have always ſurvived thoſe which had no other aim than real utility. Dulneſs only can pore over the unintereſting page where nothing is offered to ſooth the ear, and flatter the imagination. Such ſtudy reſembles a journey over gloomy deſarts where no ſun-beam cheers the way, no hoſpitable door invites, no enchanting proſpect alleviates the pains of fatigue. Neceſſity alone can urge the traveller over barren tracts and ſnowtopt mountains; but he treads with rapture along the fertile vales of thoſe happier climes, where every breeze is perfume, and every ſcene a picture. Hence in the repoſitories of literature, we obſerve, that bulky tomes, replete with the profoundeſt erudition, are left untouched on duſty ſhelves; while the more ſuperficial, yet more pleaſing, productions are peruſed with wonder, and committed to memory by repetition. It is indeed a melancholy reflection, that thoſe immenſe works of learning,

learning, which coſt the labour of a life, which were produced by many an aching head and palpitating heart, and by which immortality was to be acquired, are at laſt conſigned to oblivion, becauſe their authors have neglected to combine external beauty with intrinſic value.

Every ſpecies of compoſition has ſome end in view, which if it does not accompliſh, it falls ſhort of due perfection. The end of all hiſtorical, rhetorical, and poetical works, is to pleaſe as well as to inſtruct. If either of theſe does not comprehend every mode of pleaſing which is conſiſtent with its kind, it is faulty. Upon this plea, the advocates for rhyme, in Engliſh verſe, reſt their argument. Rhyme, ſay they, judiciouſly conducted, gives an additional power of pleaſing to the naturally inherent charms of poetry. It is not to be rejected as a gothic ornament, invented by monkiſh barbariſm, and continued by a bigotted adherence to cuſtom; but is to be adopted and admired as an improvement even on claſſic verſification. In the hands of a Dryden,

or

or a Pope, it ſooths the ear with a melody hardly equalled by a Virgil: and though no judicious critic can join Voltaire in cenſuring Shakeſpeare for not adopting rhyme, becauſe rhyme is abſurd in converſation, whether dramatic or convivial; yet every one muſt allow, that the poems of Pope would loſe much of their beauty ſhould they be deprived of rhyme, even though the ſubject matter were not to undergo the leaſt variation. We ſhould indeed ſtill find, as Horace ſays on another occaſion, the ſcattered limbs of a diſmembered poet, but we ſhould infallibly loſe all thoſe graces which reſult from harmony and proportion. The bare matter, however juſt the thoughts and forcible the reaſoning, would not give the author the reputation of a great poet. The ſame remarks may be transferred to proſaic compoſition. We ſhall ſeldom liſten, unleſs the ear is charmed, while the mind is convinced.

It is not enough to bring the ſtone from the quarry, and form it into a regular pile, in the rude ſtate in which it was produced

produced by nature. It may indeed, however rough and unſhapen, afford a ſhelter in neceſſity, and ſerve all the purpoſes of common uſe; but will not ſtrike the eye of a paſſenger with wonder, till the chiſel in the maſter's hand ſhall have called forth each latent beauty, added the feſtoon and the Corinthian foliage, and united grace with ſtrength.

It is well known, that the firſt compoſitions of the moſt celebrated writers were poetical. The faculty of imagination is the firſt that diſplays itſelf in the human mind. The ardour of youth, too wild to be reſtrained by frigid rules, loves to indulge in all the licence of poetry: but as the reaſoning powers ripen, they become enabled to controul the ſallies of fancy, which, perhaps, of itſelf gradually grows chaſter and more correct. At this advanced period, the mind deſcends from the heights of poetry to proſe. It, however, inſenſibly communicates ſome of the graces of the art which it has relinquiſhed, to that which it aſſumes. A vein of poetical ore will be diſcerned not only

only in the thought, but in the ſtyle; which though it will not fall into the fault of real metre, will neceſſarily flow in ſuch cadence as a poetical ear ſhall dictate and approve.

Unlearned readers among the moderns ſeldom attend to the beauties of harmonious compoſition. If they are pleaſed with it, they know not whence their pleaſure ariſes. Attentive to the matter rather than the manner, they would, perhaps, think an author but ill employed who ſhould write a long treatiſe on the art of tuning a period. They would be ſurpriſed to be informed, that one of the antient critics has acquired immortal fame by perfecting an art which is converſant in ſound, rather than in ſenſe, and which in their opinion is unimportant. Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus, however, owes more of his reputation to his Treatiſe on the Structure of Words, than to any other of his works. After ſo excellent a model in Greek, it is juſtly matter of wonder, that nothing of this kind has been attempted with ſucceſs in the Engliſh language.

Cicero

Cicero has attributed an efficacy to a harmony of period, which experience only can prove to be real. A ſentence of no more than five words was received with univerſal plaudits, though, as the author of it confeſſed, their whole merit conſiſted in the ſkilful collocation. Tranſpoſe but a ſingle word, and the effect will be entirely loſt. In his elegant Dialogues on the Character of an Orator, he has entered into a curious diſquiſition on the ſubject of proſaic numbers, and ſeems to require in an oration, an exactneſs of metre almoſt equal to that of verſe. The ſubject is certainly curious, and this great rhetorician, as well as orator, has treated it with preciſion: but as the quantity of Latin words is aſcertained by rules very different from the analogy of modern languages, the ſtrictures of Cicero have no otherwiſe contributed to harmonize the periods of our writers, than by ſuggeſting the beauty and expediency of proſaic modulation.

But if his precepts have not much influence in giving this finiſhing grace to

compoſitions in our own language, his example may communicate to them the moſt captivating melody. His cadences are almoſt as pleaſing to a ſuſceptible ear, as a regular piece of muſic. So neceſſary did he deem it to ſatisfy the ſenſe of hearing, that he often adds a ſynonymous and unneceſſary word to complete the roundneſs of his period. To accuſe an author, of Cicero's fame, of uſing words merely for the ſound, may, perhaps, ſurpriſe him who is not converſant in his writings; but the recollection of a few paſſages will immediately induce thoſe, who are well acquainted with his works, to acknowledge the juſtneſs of this obſervation.

But whoever would trace this harmony to its origin, muſt be referred to the Greek writers. Their numerous expletives which occur in every page, are uſed almoſt ſolely to fill up chaſms in the cadence, and to render the harmony full and perfect. Some critics have, indeed, attempted to point out the ſignification of every particle in every paſſage; but their ill ſucceſs, after all their diligence, is a confirmation of the truth of the preceding poſition.

Plato's

Plato's periods are the models of Cicero. A good ear, on a curſory compariſon of a few ſentences, cannot but obſerve how well the Roman orator has imitated the Greek philoſopher.

It may be reaſonably conjectured, that one cauſe why thoſe antient writers who have come down to us entire, ſurvived their contemporaries who once rivalled them, might perhaps be, that they extended their attention beyond the copiouſneſs of matter and ſolidity of ſenſe, to pleaſing ſound and modulated cadence.

If the writers of the preſent age excel thoſe of the paſt in any particular, it is, perhaps, in the numbers or harmony of their compoſitions. A common writer will now exhibit a greater variety of muſical cadences in his haſty productions, than is to be found in the moſt finiſhed pieces of our old Engliſh writers *. Many celebrated productions of late times, which are chiefly indebted for their fame to harmony of period, might be enumerated; but their well known merit renders additional applauſe ſuperfluous.

* Raleigh, Hooker, Aſcham, and ſeveral writers in the reign of Elizabeth, muſt be excepted.

ESSAY XXXIX.

ON THE OLD ENGLISH POETS.

THE antiquarian ſpirit, which was once confined to enquiries concerning the manners, the buildings, the records, and the coins of the ages that preceded us, has now extended itſelf to thoſe poetical compoſitions which were popular among our forefathers, but which have gradually ſunk into oblivion through the decay of language, and the prevalence of a correct and poliſhed taſte. Books printed in the black letter are ſought for with the ſame avidity with which the Engliſh antiquary peruſes a monumental inſcription, or treaſures up a Saxon piece of money. The popular ballad compoſed by ſome illiterate minſtrel, and which has been handed down by tradition for ſeveral centuries, is reſcued from the hands of the vulgar, to obtain a place in the collection of the man of taſte. Verſes, which

which, a few years paſt, were thought worthy the attention of children only, or of the loweſt and rudeſt orders, are now admired for that artleſs ſimplicity which once obtained the name of coarſeneſs and vulgarity.

It muſt be confeſſed, that this taſte is fortunate for the public in general. An old ruſty coin or ſhield would excite rapture in a Swinton or Rawlinſon, but would be beheld with perfect indifference by the greater part of the literati, and deſpiſed by the reſt. But the genuine beauties of poetry are capable of being reliſhed by thoſe who are perfectly regardleſs whether or not it was printed in the black letter, and written by Rowley or by Chatterton. Every lover of this art is pleaſed with the judicious ſelection of Percy, and gives himſelf little concern about dates. The antiquary may perhaps admire the oldeſt and the worſt piece in the collection. He is entitled to the enjoyment. He has toiled for it through many an obſcure page. And the common reader partakes with him in

the pleaſure reſulting from his labours in this department, though he has no adequate idea of the ſupreme felicity of poſſeſſing an Otho.

The mere antiquarian taſte in poetry is certainly abſurd. It is more difficult to diſcover the meaning of many of our old poets, diſguiſed as it is in an obſolete and uncouth phraſeology, than to read an elegant Greek or Latin author. Such ſtudy, is like raking in a dunghill for pearls, and gaining one's labour only for one's pains.

Our earlier poets, whoſe names and works are deſervedly forgotten, ſeem to have thought that rhyme was poetry. And even this conſtituent requiſite they applied with extreme negligence. It was, however, good enough for it's readers; moſt of whom conſidered the mere ability of reading as a very high attainment. It has had its day, and the antiquary muſt not deſpiſe us, if we cannot peruſe it with patience. He who delights in all ſuch reading as is never read, may derive ſome pleaſure from the ſingularity of his taſte; but

but he ought ſtill to reſpect the judgment of mankind, which has conſigned to oblivion the works which he admires. While he pores unmoleſted on Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate and Occleve, let him not cenſure our obſtinacy in adhering to Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Pope.

In peruſing the antiquated pages of our Engliſh bards, we ſometimes find a paſſage which has comparative merit, and which ſhines with the greater luſtre, becauſe it is ſurrounded with deformity. While we conſider the rude ſtate of literature, the want of models, the depraved taſte of readers, we are ſtruck with the leaſt appearance of beauty. We are flattered with an idea of our own penetration, in diſcovering excellencies which have eſcaped the notice of the world. We take up the volume with a previous determination, to prove that it contains valuable matter. We are unwilling that our pains ſhould be unrewarded. We ſelect a few lines from a long work, and by a little critical refinement, prove that they are wonderfully excellent. But the candid

are ready to confeſs, that they have not often diſcovered abſolute merit ſufficient in degree or quantity to repay the labour of reſearch.

Rowe has ſaid, that the old Engliſh bards and minſtrels ſoared many a height above their followers; and it is true, that thoſe old ballads which are in the mouths of peaſants on both ſides the Tweed, have ſomething in them irreſiſtably captivating. Vulgar, coarſe, inelegant, they yet touch the heart. Many of them, when read, as the writers intended, are muſical. They have pleaſed the ear and the mind of a whole people, and therefore, in ſpite of the cold feelings of the critic, muſt be pronounced beautiful. Addiſon firſt gained them the notice of ſcholars, by his praiſes of Chevy-Chace. He illuſtrated their beauties, by comparing them with the Claſſics. This indeed drew the attention of the claſſical reader; but it may be queſtioned, whether it would not be a better method to view them as originals; and in order to procure them a general reception, appeal

to

to the genuine feelings of nature. For, in truth, when compared as compoſitions, with the correct works of Virgil or Horace, the barbarous language in which they are written makes them appear to diſadvantage. At the ſame time, it muſt be confeſſed, that it affords a very pleaſing employment to the polite ſcholar, to remark the coincidencies of thought which are uſually found in works of genius, written at different periods by thoſe who could not poſſibly imitate each other. The philoſopher gladly ſeizes the phenomenon, as it tends to elucidate a curious truth reſpecting the human mind, that all men of nearly equal faculties, fall into nearly the ſame train of thought when placed in ſimilar circumſtances.

Notwithſtanding the incontrovertible merit of many of our antient relics of poetry, I believe it may be doubted, whether any one of them would be tolerated as the production of a modern poet. As a good imitation of the ancient manner it would find it's admirers, but conſidered independently as an ori-

ginal, it would be thought a careleſs, vulgar, inartificial compoſition. There are few who do not read Mr. Percy's own piece, and thoſe of other late writers, with more pleaſure, than the oldeſt ballad in the collection of that ingenious writer.

Poetical genius appeared with great luſtre among the Scots, at a time when it was obſcured in England. At one of the barreneſt periods of Engliſh literature, Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndſay wrote with great elegance in the true ſpirit of original poetry. They wanted only a better language, and a more durable dialect, to have become national claſſics. With all their beauties it is difficult to read them with patience; for the neceſſity of continually recurring to a gloſſary, cools the ardour which the peruſal of a beautiful paſſage may have excited, and induces the tired reader to fly to more modern books, whoſe gold, equally pure, may be extracted without the trouble of an analytical proceſs.

The preſent is an age of literary deception. It is indeed characteriſtical of an advanced

advanced period of letters and refinement, when the various modes of writing have, in every department, been anticipated, to have recourſe to forgery in order to gain attention. Of this every one acquainted with the preſent ſtate of literature in England, is ſenſible. Chatterton, though the beſt, is not the only imitator and pretended reſtorer of our ancient poets.

It will be allowed by all, that a compoſition ought to be eſtimated by its abſolute, not its relative merit. And yet a poem, which, while it is ſuppoſed to have been written three or four centuries ago, is generally read and admired, is neglected as ſoon as it is diſcovered to be a modern production. That it ſhould loſe its value in the eyes of the antiquary, when it is found to wear only a counterfeited ruſt, is not wonderful; but it might reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that the man of taſte would continue to admire it even after the detection. Though at the ſame time it is true, that moſt men have ſo much of the antiquarian ſpirit as to feel an additional pleaſure when

excellence is united with antiquity. By an effort of imagination, we place ourſelves in the age of the author, and call up a thouſand collateral ideas which give beauties to his work not naturally inherent.

Whether the antiquarian taſte in poetry is reaſonable or unreaſonable, it affords an elegant and a pleaſing amuſement to thoſe who poſſeſs it. Miſtakes in matters of mere taſte and literature are harmleſs in their conſequences to ſociety. They have no direct tendency to hurt any intereſt, or corrupt any morals. While therefore they are not likely to become general, they muſt not be attacked with virulence. Diſputes in the republic of letters; a republic, unlike the political commonwealth, ſhould be conducted with gentleneſs. That humanity of temper which a ſucceſsful purſuit of learning inſpires, would, of itſelf, it might be ſuppoſed, ſecure a mild and generous behaviour in literary controverſy. But the reverſe has uſually been the caſe. Bentley, Middleton, Warburton, have ſometimes

times indulged an irritable temper beyond thoſe limits, which as chriſtians and ſcholars they muſt have ſeen and approved. They who have obſerved the rancour mutually diſplayed in the diſagreements of the learned, muſt have concluded, if they knew not the ſtate of the queſtion, that ſomething of the utmoſt conſequence to life, fame, or fortune was at ſtake. Contempt or indignation muſt have taken place, when they found that nothing more was agitated, than the propriety or impropriety of Greek accents, the genuineneſs of ſome fooliſh book, the juſtneſs of a conjectural emendation, and other ſubjects, which had not the leaſt tendency to promote or injure ſcience or ſociety.

ESSAY XL.

ON SCULPTURE.

THAT the human mind is naturally delighted with the works of imitation, is a remark of the earlieſt philoſophers, and the juſtneſs of it has been uniformly confirmed by every ſubſequent enquiry. Even thoſe objects which in reality diſguſt the ſenſes, when imitated by the ſkilful artiſt pleaſe the imagination: but if imitation is capable of converting deformity to beauty, and of teaching inelegance to pleaſe, its influence muſt be ſtill greater on the mind, when the object imitated, originally excites ideas of the ſublime and beautiful.

Juſt repreſentations of the irrational or inanimate creation, are, indeed, in a great degree pleaſing; but the higheſt delight which the fine arts can beſtow, is derived from imitations of human nature. The variegated landſcape is, perhaps, viewed with greater complacency on the canvas, than in the natural appearance, becauſe imitation

imitation adds a grace to the intrinſic beauty. The bloom of the grape, the bluſh of the peach, and the crimſon of the roſe, deſigned by nature to pleaſe, may perhaps pleaſe yet more when preſented to the view by the hand-maiden of nature. The ſame obſervation may juſtly be extended to the imitation of animals, whether of the ſportive lambkin, of the rampant lion, or of the placid ſcenery of ſtill life. All theſe ſooth, but do not elevate the mind. They inſpire a complacency, but do not warm with ſentiment, or animate to virtue. To touch the heart with ſympathy, to raiſe the nobler paſſions, and to give a maſculine pleaſure, man muſt be the object of imitation. That general connection which ſubſiſts between all who partake of humanity, cauſes a general concern in the intereſts of each individual. Man views the actions and paſſions of men with all the ſolicitude of one concerned in the event, but looks down upon the lower parts of the creation with the diſpaſſionate curioſity of an unintereſted ſpectator.

To

To repreſent the attitudes of his actions, and the features of his paſſions, is the principal buſineſs of SCULPTURE; and though a conſiderable degree of its excellence depends on the delicacy of manual execution, yet has it ever maintained a diſtinguiſhed place among the arts which require a fine imagination. To degrade Sculpture to a mechanic art, becauſe it works with the tools of the maſon, were to involve painting in the ſame debaſement, becauſe it uſes the implements of the houſe-painter. A ſucceſsful purſuit of Sculpture requires a previous genius and a ſubſequent cultivation; and though a ſtone-cutter may hew out the rude image of a man, yet will not his inartificial work entitle him to the honourable appellation of a ſculptor. Nature, indeed, lies open to the inſpection of the learned and of the unlearned, of the ſtupid and of the ingenious; but the man of fine feeling, and of elegant taſte, can alone perceive her more delicate traits, her more captivating, though leſs obvious, allurements. To follow nature to her inmoſt

receſſes, to catch the idea of beauty at a glance, and to mark it on the ſtone, demands a ſoul as ſenſible, and a fancy as glowing, as ever warmed the boſom of a Homer. Could the productions of the chiſel be multiplied with the ſame facility as thoſe of the ſtyle, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe, that Greece would have derived a luſtre from her ſculptors, equal to that ſhe acquired from her poets: but while the writings of a Homer were diſſeminated by copies which loſt nothing of the original, the works of a Phidias probably ſuffered by every ſucceeding copy; or while the poem was in every hand and in every memory, the ſtatue was circumſcribed within the limits of a ſingle city, or even ſhut up in the repoſitory of ſome ſelfiſh virtuoſo: but concealment is not an argument of want of merit; and the obſervation is trite becauſe true, that the flower which blooms in the deſart, yields not in colour or fragrance to the flower of the garden, which invites the hand and courts admiration.

It were eaſy, for it would require perſeverance rather than ingenuity, to trace the origin of Sculpture in Ægypt, to its perfection in Greece; to purſue it to ancient Rome, to follow it to its revival in modern Italy, and to mark the ſtages of its progreſs in our own country; but the taſk has been repeatedly performed; and inveſtigations of this ſort, however they may amuſe curioſity, are more adapted to the patience of the hiſtoriographer, than to the ſprightlineſs of the eſſayiſt, or the taſte of the connoiſſeur.

The firſt productions of this art probably owe their origin to religion. Too groſs to conceive immaterial ideas of the Deity, the vulgar wanted ſome ſenſible object to fix attention, and excite enthuſiaſm. Thus he, whoſe temple is all ſpace, and whoſe altar the univerſe, was confined in his reſidence to ſome rude image, graven by the hand of idolatry: but however derogatory from the dignity of the Supreme Being, or inconſiſtent with the reaſon of man, the practice has been peculiarly favourable to the arts of imitation.

tation. The ſtatue that was formed as an object of religious adoration, has, indeed, failed in its original purpoſe; but it has been viewed with wonder little leſs than worſhip, and the ſculptor may be ſaid to have propagated this relique of paganiſm, among the profeſſors of the pureſt of religions.

And, indeed, it is to be preſumed, that few will be ſo ſtrenuous promoters of reformation as to wiſh that attention, which is at preſent paid to the ſtatues of the antient Deities, forbidden: for whenever they ſhall ceaſe to be admired, they will ceaſe to be imitated. Such an event every friend to juſt taſte will deprecate, ſince to renounce the models of the antients, is to renounce the moſt captivating embelliſhment of art, an adherence to ſimplicity and nature. While a *Venus de Medicis*, and an *Apollo Belvedere*, ſhall continue to be ſtandards of excellence, no one need apprehend leſt the chaſte graces of real elegance, ſhould be ſacrificed to the falſe glare of gothic affectation.

To do juſtice to the remains of antiquity by deſcription, requires a pen as

maſterly as the artiſt's chiſel. A Virgil ſhould exhibit the ideas of a Praxiteles. A profeſſor of the art may, perhaps, find technical terms adequate to a technical deſcription. He may expatiate on proportion, and dictate rules for forming a judgment; but the language of an artiſt ſhould be addreſſed only to artiſts. Perhaps there may be no other mode by which they, who have no pretenſions to *virtù*, can obtain a juſt conception of the excellency of the antient productions, than ocular obſervation. A general notion may, however, be acquired by hearing from others, that all ages have agreed in applauding theſe remains of antiquity, and that they are able of themſelves to extort admiration from every taſte not yet vitiated by barbariſm.

Compariſons are frequently made between the reſpective beauty, the value, and the utility, of the ſeveral arts. One of the beſt judges of antiquity has aſſerted, in a well known paſſage of his works, that all the arts which tend to poliſh and refine human nature, are united by a common

mon bond. That painting, poetry, and ſculpture, nearly approximate to each other, is obvious on the ſlighteſt review. They have conſtantly reflected images on each other, and joining like the Graces, hand in hand, have, from the union of their force, commanded in all ages univerſal admiration. If the Mantuan Muſe drew her moſt beautiful pictures from the originals of Sculpture, to the Muſe of Homer, on the other hand, has Sculpture, been indebted for her maſter piece. The ſublime idea of a Being who ſhook the heavens with his nod, exiſted originally in the poet's mind. The artiſt, however, embodied the ideal form, and may almoſt be ſaid to have wanted only Promethean aid to have realized the creature of imagination. The marble form has been transferred to canvas, and the repreſentation of the tablet to the marble, with equal applauſe both to the arts and to the profeſſors: and though ſome have eſſayed to aſcertain the ſuperiority of one or other of theſe ſiſter arts, yet as it is invidious to give a diſtinguiſhing preference to either,

when each endeavours to exalt the other, it may be more candid to aſſert, with Horace on a ſimilar occaſion, that they equally require and communicate mutual aſſiſtance, with all the benignity of diſintereſted friendſhip.

Sculpture is not, any more than the other arts, confined to imitations of the human form. Subordinate to ſtatuary, are many other operations of the chiſel, which require both ingenuity of deſign, and ſkill of execution. The marble urn, and the ſepulchral monument, have ever been the chief ornaments of manſions dedicated to the Deity. The palaces of princes have derived leſs ſplendour from the profuſion of finery, and the glittering of magnificence, than from the foliage of the Corinthian capital, and the elegant wreaths of the feſtoon: and though the modern invention of multiplying the works of the artiſt, by devices which require no ingenuity, has proſtituted the ornaments of a temple to the gaudineſs of a ſuburbian villa, and the decoration of a palace to the embelliſhment of a tradeſman's door poſt;

poſt; yet muſt not he, whoſe hand formed the original vaſe, or ſculptured the ſtoried urn, loſe that praiſe which is ever due to the inventive artiſt.

It belongs to ſculpture, as well as to painting, not only to repreſent ſingle figures, but to combine them in a group. The relievo is a marble picture; though it wants thoſe graces of the canvas which reſult from a due mixture of light and ſhade, and from a variety of colours, yet it poſſeſſes ſome advantages which may ultimately compenſate the defect. Expoſure to the weather, the commoneſt accidents, and the inſenſible depredations of time, ſoon deſtroy the comparatively tranſient productions of the pencil: but the marble tablet defies the corroding tooth of ages, and may ſurvive even a deluge or a conflagration. There remains not a ſingle painting of Parrhaſius or Apelles, of Timanthes or Protagoras, by which we can judge of the juſtice of thoſe praiſes ſo laviſhly beſtowed on them by Pliny, Quintilian, and Lucian; but many antient relievos continue, at the

preſent day, in all their original perfection.

Sculpture ſtill retains all its grace and excellence, when it condeſcends to work in miniature. The gem, however precious and beautiful, receives additional value, and more attractive beauty, from the hand of the artiſt. The features of the hero and philoſopher when marked on the ſtone, whoſe coheſion is like that of adamant, are tranſmitted to the lateſt ages, unhurt by accidents, and unimpaired by time. Thus is the votary of learning enabled to behold the countenances of thoſe whoſe atchievements aſtoniſh, whoſe writings charm, and whoſe precepts improve him; and after the lapſe of ſome thouſand years, to indulge the natural deſire of viewing the real aſpect of men who ſhone in the field, and in the cabinet, or who dignified the portico or the academy. When all other ſources of information have failed, the figure on the gem has often illuſtrated beauties, and cleared obſcurities in the claſſic, which had perplexed ſagacity, and eluded inveſtigation.

Of

Of theſe ſmaller productions of the ſculptor, the ingenuity of modern invention, ſtimulated by the hopes of gain, has found means to multiply copies without number, which though they ſhould leſſen the pecuniary value of the originals, cannot diminiſh their intrinſic merit.

To exalt the antients, and to depreciate the moderns, is the favourite theme of every declaimer: but to examine the ſubject with care, to weigh the merit of both, and to adjuſt their claims to preference with preciſion, requires a greater ſhare of learning, accuracy and taſte, than they, who are moſt eager to engage in the compariſon, uſually poſſeſs. Without venturing to pronounce a final ſentence, from which the liberty of private opinion will ever claim a right to ſwerve, it may not be improper to remark, that nothing but a bigotry, equal to idiotiſm, can refuſe to allow the moderns a ſuperiority in arts of their own invention. Among theſe, is that branch of Sculpture which is diſtinguiſhed by the ſpecific appellation of En-

GRAVING. By the co-operation of this ſiſter art, the productions of painting are univerſally diffuſed, and the ornament reſerved in the gallery of an individual, becomes the embelliſhment of every habitation. However great its uſes, and exalted its perfection; in the preſent age, it muſt be confeſſed, by every impartial obſerver, to owe a great degree of its advancement to the artiſts of our own country: and it were eaſy to enumerate ſome works of Engliſh engravers, of which the nobleneſs of deſign, the juſtneſs of repreſentation, and the delicacy of execution, render it difficult to conceive that they could have been ſurpaſſed by the ingenuity of any age or of any nation.

Some there are, who, with a ſpirit too confined for the liberality of philoſophy, have excluded from all pretenſions to refined taſte, that part of mankind which nature has placed in the northern regions. This faculty has been limited to thoſe happier mortals who inhabit the ſoft Savanna, and inhale the balmy breezes of the ſouthern climates. That theſe

arts

arts have been moſt ſucceſsfully cultivated in the warmer countries of Europe, cannot be denied; and, perhaps, that indolence of temper which is the conſequence of heat, may have inclined the inhabitants to purſue with more conſtancy the various modes of exciting pleaſure: but let it not be ſaid, that any of the faculties of the mind are local. Nor let it be haſtily concluded, that the Engliſh, who are claſſed by theſe philoſophers among the northern ſavages, but who are known to poſſeſs the mental powers in a ſtate of vigour equal at leaſt to the reſt of the world, are deſtitute of that faculty which adds a grace to the exertions of all others, and without which the ſtrongeſt efforts of the mind have an appearance of illiberality. If it was late before our artiſts made any conſiderable proficiency in Sculpture, it muſt not be immediately inferred, that they were incapable of excellence; but that, as is inconteſtably true, they did not attempt it. To expect, that the art ſhould attain to perfection before it is an object of national attention, is no leſs unreaſonable than to require

require the fruit in maturity before the plantation of the tree.

The ſun-ſhine of royal patronage can baffle the rigours of the climate, and raiſe luxuriant vegetation on the bleakeſt mountain. Rewarded by a prince, and encouraged by a people, it is not to be wondered, that Sculpture has among us made rapid advances to attainable perfection. It were, indeed, eaſy to enumerate names which would do honour to the ſchools of Greece, and of antient and modern Italy: but to praiſe living merit, is frequently to excite envy without conferring fame. The voice of an individual can, indeed, ſeldom be heard amidſt univerſal acclamation, or if it ſhould be diſtinguiſhed, it is ſuppoſed by malevolence to be the officious clamour of perſonal attachment, rather than the ſuffrage of ſincere approbation. The ingenious artiſt then muſt be content to appeal to poſterity for unalloyed applauſe, and when the tongue of envy ſhall be wearied with detraction, then will merited praiſe find a willing audience. Suffice it in general to aſſert,

that

that there are ſculptors among us of the preſent day, whoſe fame will be as durable as the marble pile which they ſhape, and who while they carve the block, may, like Thucydides, promiſe themſelves an everlaſting poſſeſſion*.

Thoſe arts, however, after all that has been ſaid in their praiſe, which tend to flatter the imagination without amending the heart, and the utility of which appears to conſiſt in their adminiſtration to pleaſure, will, perhaps, be judged unworthy a ſerious attention by the rigid votaries of ſevere virtue. Too wiſe to be captivated with pleaſure, they ſeek only for improvement. The pill that contributes to health, they can ſwallow without requiring it to be covered with gold, or ſweetened with honey: but to condemn the productions of the chiſel as merely inſtrumental to delight, is to aſſume that as a conceſſion which can never be granted. In truth, the imitative arts are capable of conveying moral inſtruction in the moſt effectual manner, as their

* Κτημα ες αει.

operation

operation is inſtantaneous. They require not the deductions of reaſon, which can only be made by cultivated intellects; but by appealing to the ſenſes, which are ſometimes combined in great perfection with the rudeſt minds, they ſtrike immediately and irreſiſtibly on the ſuſceptible heart. The maſter's hand can give to matter the features of the ſoul, and impreſs on the rude block thoſe thoughts and paſſions, which naturally excite congenial ſentiments and ſympathetic emotions: and the mind, which, perhaps, could never be ſenſible of the beauty of virtue from the reaſonings of a Plato, or a Socrates, may be captivated with her amiable form when diſplayed by a Phidias or Praxiteles.

No man of ſenſibility can walk in the repoſitories of the illuſtrious dead, where the forms, that moulder beneath his feet, are repreſented in marble on the walls, without feeling, as he treads the ſolemn iſle, the moſt virtuous ſenſations. His faculties ſeem to ſtretch, and his virtues to expand, in efforts to reach the level of ſuch

ſuch exalted ſociety. He catches the contagion of virtue by intuition, he forms heroic reſolutions of emulating the excellence he admires, and, perhaps, ventures to entertain a ſecret hope, that he may one day fill a niche in the venerable circle of departed worthies. The deſcendant bluſhes to degenerate from his anceſtors, who ſeem to view him from the ſacred walls, and would upbraid him with his baſeneſs. Perhaps, the experience of every feeling mind will juſtify the aſſertion, that virtue may be forcibly recommended by the ſilent ſuggeſtions of the monumental buſt, at the ſame time that it is ſtrongly inculcated by the eloquence of the pulpit.

Sculpture has, likewiſe, another no leſs efficacious, though more indirect influence on the morals. It has, in common with all the fine arts, an inviſible effect in ſoftening the temper and humanizing the manners, an effect which will, perhaps, be felt and acknowledged by none but men of delicate taſte and elegant attainments. The votaries of gain, of luxury,

luxury, or of pleaſure, have loſt by the groſsneſs of their enjoyments, that nice ſuſceptibility of impreſſions, that tenderneſs of feeling, which can alone perceive, with full force, the pleaſures of imagination. The vulgar eye gazes with equal ſatisfaction on the canvas of a Titian, and the daubings of a ſign, and diſcovers no more ingenuity in the work of the ſtatuary, than in the leaden image of the mechanic: but they whoſe natural feelings have been properly improved by culture, nor have yet become callous by attrition with the world, know, from experience, how the heart is mollified, the manners poliſhed, and the temper ſweetened by a well-directed ſtudy of the arts of imitation. The ſame ſenſibility of artificial excellence, extends itſelf to the perception of natural and moral beauty; and the ſtudent returns from the artiſts gallery to his ſtation in ſociety, with a breaſt more diſpoſed to feel and to reverberate the endearments of ſocial life, and of reciprocal benevolence.

Sculpture claims, indeed, the power of exciting* virtue, and the privilege of rewarding it. The great benefactors to mankind have ever been animated in danger, and ſupported in fatigue, by the enlivening hope of enjoying a future exiſtence in the memory of poſterity. Satisfied with this recompence in reverſion, heroes, patriots, and philoſophers, have neglected the calls of intereſt, and the allurements of pleaſure, to advance the happineſs of ſociety, and to adorn humanity. The ſweet ſolace of their pain, the compenſation of their labours, for which the heart has often panted and every faculty has toiled, the ſtatuary's hand may ultimately confer. Let not, therefore, that art be proſtituted to perpetuate inſignificance or vice, and to gratify the vanity of undeſerving opulence, which poſſeſſes the power of rewarding virtue, and of beſtowing immortality on periſhable excellence.

* Virtue in the Roman acceptation of that word.

ESSAY XLI.

ON ARCHITECTURE.

Tectum auguſtum, ingens, centum ſublime columnis.
VIRG.

THE origin of building was probably little poſterior to the origin of mankind. Man, naked and defenceleſs, ſoon found it neceſſary to ſhelter himſelf from the inclemency of the weather, from the attacks of wild beaſts, and from the invaſion of his ſavage neighbours. He could not lie down to ſleep with ſecurity till he had formed a hut, which, however rude and inartificial, might ſerve the purpoſes of ſhelter and defence. If his own wants and natural ingenuity were not ſufficient to inſtruct him, he might learn from the irrational creation. The ſwallow's neſt, and the bee's hive, ſuggeſted hints which he might adopt and improve: but this original ſpecies of building, directed by no rules and deſtitute

tute of elegance and proportion, cannot properly be ſaid to be the work of art, or to merit the appellation of Architecture. It was, however, the embryo of thoſe noble edifices which have ſince adorned the civilized nations of the world.

To the firſt great works of Architecture, Ægypt, ever fertile in the productions of art as well as of nature, is recorded to have given riſe. Several of them are extant at this day, and are too generally known to admit of reiterated deſcription. They are ſaid to excite thoſe ideas which ariſe from magnificence of deſign, not from delicacy of execution; and they rather aſtoniſh by their grandeur, than pleaſe by their elegance.

The taſte for works of uſeleſs bulk and unwieldy greatneſs, could not long prevail. Some adequate end was required to juſtify labour and expence. It is natural to ſuppoſe, and the event has verified the conjecture, that ſome of the earlieſt efforts of the art would be devoted to religion. The magnificence of the temple was well adapted to excite ſub-

lime ideas of the Deity; and it ſeems to have been an early received opinion, that the greateſt human ſkill and induſtry could not be more properly exerted, than to diſplay the glory of Omnipotence.

From the temples of the gods, to palaces and public edifices, deſigned for general debate and for judicial tranſactions, the tranſition was eaſy and gradual. In the dwellings of private perſons, the art was diſplayed with minute elegance as well as ſuperb ſplendour. As wealth accumulated, and the arts improved, from additional leiſure and reward, to convenience and ſafety, the original objects of building, it was thought expedient to add decoration. When the few wants of nature are ſatisfied, and the dangers of a ſavage ſtate removed, the reſtleſs mind of man creates artificial objects of deſire. No ſooner are the cravings of neceſſity ſilenced, than the calls of imagination gain attention. Taſte becomes importunate when the animal appetites are at reſt. At an advanced period of ſociety, it was not enough that the habitation was large,

ſtrong, and durable. It was now required to be not only ſafe and commodious, but ornamental. All the liberal, therefore, whoſe education, genius, and poſſeſſions enabled them either to deſign or execute, ſoon devoted themſelves to the ſtudy of that ſymmetry, and form of beauty, which excites pleaſing ſenſations in the mind of man.

Perſons of this turn, and under circumſtances favourable to its exertion, were however, in the early ages, but thinly ſcattered on the face of the globe. Juſt taſte in Architecture was, at one time, confined to the comparatively ſmall country of antient Greece. By far the greater part of mankind continued long in a ſtate of barbariſm, and conſequent inſecurity, moſt unfavourable to the progreſs of elegance and refinement: but the inhabitants of antient Greece, formed, perhaps, by the partial hand of nature with feelings peculiarly ſuſceptible of every kind of beauty, very early advanced the art of building to a degree of perfection, which the united intellects of all

the civilized world have not ſince been able to ſurpaſs. Men have, indeed, ſometimes ventured, from motives of vanity or caprice, to deviate from theſe models, but have commonly returned to them ſoon, with a clear conviction of having loſt ſight of excellence in the purſuit of innovation.

Perfection has commonly followed invention at a long interval; and the beſt productions of art have ſeldom been univerſally, and without exception, well received: but the orders of Architecture, invented by the Greeks, have never admitted real improvement by alteration, nor have they yet been beheld with diſguſt, or diſapprobation, by a ſingle individual. Fanciful changes, in the capital of a column, or in trifling embelliſhments, have, indeed, frequently been adopted; but, though they might pleaſe the vanity of the artiſt, and be applauded by his partial admirers, yet have they ſeldom given ſatisfaction to the general ſpectator. Ignorance and dulneſs may have viewed the Grecian Architecture with an

an indifference eaſily accounted for; but every ſenſible mind, though unacquainted with rules, and free from favourable prepoſſeſſions, feels itſelf involuntarily ſoothed and elevated by the contemplation of it. Profuſion of ornament, and complicated vaſtneſs, have never yet been found able to cauſe that effect which is produced by SIMPLE MAGNIFICENCE. What is ſaid of the Grecian Architecture, is to be extended to thoſe few additions which the Romans made, ſo ſimilar to the primitive productions of Greece, that we do not ſeparate them as conſtituting different ſtyles, but claſs them, for the ſake of ſimplicity, under one denomination.

Such then is the general characteriſtic of Grecian Architecture; which, though it originally diſplayed that kind of beauty which ſeems, from the univerſality of its influence, congenial to the human mind, has, at various times, been loſt by diſuſe, corrupted by vicious taſte, and mutilated by ignorance. To trace it in the progreſs of its revolutions, and to treat with technical accuracy of the dimenſions and

particular modes of alteration, would be to invade the province of the architect and hiſtorian. It were to enter upon a detail, jejune and unintereſting. We pretend not preſumptuouſly to compoſe a didactic treatiſe, or an hiſtorical diſſertation, but endeavour to expreſs the feelings of the elegant, though common ſpectator, without the formality and preciſion of the profeſſed connoiſſeur.

During that period of literary darkneſs which overſpread all the nations of Europe, the antient arts, from their intimate connection with antient learning, were involved in the general obſcurity. Still, however, edifices for religious, for civil, for domeſtic purpoſes were neceſſary; and the human mind, active even under diſadvantageous circumſtances, invented modes of Architecture, of which there exiſted no antient model. Of theſe, the learned antiquary is able to diſcriminate the ſpecific differences, and to point out with accuracy the Gothic, the Saracen, and other ſtyles, with all their temporary modifications. The general ſpectator, however,

however, includes them all under the name of Gothic Architecture; and, indeed, the great reſemblance between them in many of their moſt ſtriking features, and the common notions on the ſubject, in ſome meaſure, juſtify the conſidering them as of the ſame tribe, accidentally diverſified by that analogous irregularity, if we may ſo expreſs it, which is often viſible in the works of art as well as of nature*.

The many venerable monuments which remain in our own country, to teſtify the magnificence of our anceſtors, enable every one to form an idea of the Gothic ſtile from actual obſervation: and it muſt be confeſſed, that they bear evident marks of great ſkill, great labour, and great expence. Taſte, ſince the builders of thoſe times made little pretenſion to it, and had few opportunities for its improvement, is not to be looked for in their works, and will, indeed, ſel-

* —— Facies non omnibus una,
Nec diverſa tamen, qualem decet eſſe ſororum.
OVID.

dom be found. To the perfection of a building, they ſeem at one time to have thought it neceſſary to exhibit the appearance of great manual labour in little decorations, and to dazzle the eye with gilding, ſculpture, paint, and finery *. That any part could be great from its ſimplicity, and beautiful from its want of ornament, they had little apprehenſion. They had neither the models of antiquity before their eyes, nor the treatiſes of thoſe philoſophers at hand, who have inveſtigated the true cauſes of beauty and ſublimity. No wonder, therefore, that the maſon and the mechanic were ſuffered to diſplay their dexterity in fanciful and capricious exertions. Difficulty of execution, and the appearance of uncommon labour, were often the only criterions of excellence with the ſpectator, as well as with the artiſt, at a time when neither of them had opportunities of cultivating a refined taſte, or of form-

* This ſtile is called the FLORID, by thoſe who undertake to diſcriminate the various ſpecies of Gothic Architecture.

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ing a ſolid judgment by precept, or by example.

But the modern ſpectator has unavoidably become familiar with the Greek model, and, without any great effort, acquires rules of judging of the fine arts according to truth, nature, and ſimplicity. On entering the Gothic abbey, or the hall, he is, indeed, ſtruck with ideas of ſolemnity, and is conſcious of a gloomy grandeur. The fretted roof, the long-drawn iſle, the pointed arch, and the dim twilight from the narrow window, excite a ſpecies of emotions peculiarly adapted to the purpoſes of the cathedral. Perhaps, however, the air of antiquity, which the Gothic piles have by this time acquired, has, at leaſt, an equal ſhare in producing this effect on the obſerver. When he views the abbey merely as a work of Architecture, without admitting religious or hiſtorical aſſociations, and without indulging the prejudices of the antiquary, perhaps he no longer feels himſelf affected with ſurpriſe, or particularly diſpoſed to devotion. When he looks

looks up without prejudice, he owns that however extenſive the area, and vaſt the ſtructure, his attention is drawn off from contemplating the grandeur of the whole, by a PROFUSION OF LITTLE ORNAMENTS, whoſe angles offend the eye, and which deſtroy the unity of the object. A great multiplicity of ideas cannot ſeverally make a due impreſſion, and produce a proper effect, when they operate in conjunction*. While we ſurvey the complicated parts, we neglect the whole; and while we attend to the whole, by abſtracting the parts, which is neither an eaſy nor an agreeable effort, thoſe laviſh ornaments, of which the complicated parts conſiſt, become indifferent or diſguſting, becauſe uſeleſs, ſuperfluous, and cumberſome. Inſtead of cauſing agreeable ſenſations, which ought to be a ſubordinate object in every building for public uſe, ſuch edifices are found to raiſe ideas, in ſome degree painful, from the diſtraction of mind which they occaſion.

* Pectora noſtra duas non admittentia curas.

Juv.

caſion. Meanneſs is often the reſult where ſublimity was expected, and littleneſs appears even in the midſt of grandeur.

Gothic Architecture is often found diſguſting at preſent, from a diſproportion or inconſiſtency, which, perhaps, originally pleaſed. A long and ſlender pillar ſometimes apparently ſupports a weight which ſeems too great for it to bear: and though the obſerver is certain that it has ſtood for ages, yet, on his firſt ſurvey of it, he muſt do violence to his feelings not to be in a ſmall degree conſcious of alarm. Though ſoon ſatisfied of ſafety, yet the want of ſymmetry induces him to pronounce an object highly deformed, which probably, by the appearance of extraordinary ſkill, delighted our anceſtors. The pointed arch, which, becauſe we have always ſeen it uſed in buildings venerable for age and ſanctity, we have learned to think peculiarly ſolemn, is certainly in itſelf unpleaſing and improper. The awkward angle, in the vertex, ſtops the rapid courſe of the eye, which loves

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to purſue the line of a circle, or ſemi-circle, without obſtruction. Nor let the ſatisfaction which is ſometimes experienced from a view of it, be thought an unanſwerable objection to the general juſtneſs of this remark: for pleaſing ideas aſſociated with objects unpleaſing, will often communicate their agreeable tinge by approximation, and render even deformity no longer ungraceful. A view of the Gothic arch, in the antique pile raiſed by our progenitors, perhaps, calls to remembrance the generations that have preceded us, renews the idea of ſome hiſtorical fact or celebrated perſonage, or ſuggeſts reflections on the piety, the zeal, the comparative ingenuity of our forefathers; and on the whole, raiſes thoughts pleaſingly awful on the ſanctity of the TIME-HONOURED edifice. All, or any of theſe arbitrary aſſociations, will give an agreeable air to an object, which might otherwiſe be contemplated with indifference or diſguſt.

The painted window, a ſtriking ornament of our antient edifices, exhibits a ſpecimen

ſpecimen by which we may form a judgment of the general turn of that taſte which dictated every other decoration. Glaring colours rendered ſtill more glaring by tranſparency, ſeem to have conſtituted, in the idea of thoſe who lived a century or two ago, the perfection of beauty. Accordingly, they viewed with a pleaſure, uncontrolled by the chaſte notions of modern elegance, the gaudy ſhrine, the glittering altar, the painted monument, and the emblazoned cieling. Exactneſs of repreſentation, and a faithful adherence to nature and propriety, were indeed wanting; but their place was amply ſupplied by the glare of dazzling ſplendour. Perhaps, it may be juſtly queſtioned, whether the genuine graces of unadorned nature were at all pleaſing to eyes accuſtomed to admire all that was artificial. The Medicean Venus would probably have had few charms, till dreſſed like the lady of Loretto. The meretricious ſtaining of the glaſs, was commonly preferred to the chaſte colouring of the canvas. Such, indeed, is the general preference where refinement is unknown;

unknown; and there is no doubt, but that an Indian would ſet a higher value on the Dutch toy which glitters, and awkwardly imitates the human ſhape, than on the ſtatue of a Phídias, or on the painting of an Apelles. No wonder that our anceſtors, at a period when they neither ſtudied nature nor the antients, diſplayed in their works of art, the characteriſtic groſſneſs of barbariſm. Finery ſtrikes immediately on the perceptive faculties, and a very conſiderable degree of civilization muſt have taken place, before the firſt ſtrong deciſion of the ſenſes can be ſuperſeded by the dictates of critical delicacy.

The parts of a building, which add to its ſtrength, ought, whenever it is practicable, to contribute to its beauty. The vaſt buttreſſes of the Gothic Architecture, ſuppoſing that they were neceſſary to ſupport, which however they were not always, are ſeldom thought at preſent to conduce to ornament: but that they were often intended to adorn, we may conclude from their being applied where,

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as ſupports, they are ſuperfluous. And indeed, conſidered in this light, they are perfectly conſiſtent with that general taſte which ſeems to have delighted in ſupernumerary appendages, provided they conveyed the idea of great labour or difficulty. In the caſtle, and the fortified wall, they are, indeed, always admitted with good effect, becauſe they add to the appearance of ſecurity as well as to real ſtrength; but in edifices, conſecrated to religion and the arts of peace, they occaſion that diſguſt to true taſte, which reſults from the miſapplication of ſupports and embelliſhments. Nor are they of themſelves in the leaſt beautiful. They want the rotundity of the column, and the uprightneſs of the pilaſter, and abound with unpleaſing angles.

The internal ſupports are often no leſs heavy and inelegant*. Even where there appears a great reſemblance to Grecian

* It muſt be confeſſed, that there is a Gothic ſtile remarkably light, and which pleaſes when not contraſted with Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian elegance.

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Architecture, we find no veſtiges of Grecian grace. The pillars are prepoſterouſly thick, and want the due height to render them pleaſing to the eye. The baſes, the ſhafts, and the capitals, are joined together without ſymmetry, and ſeem not to have been conſidered by the artiſts as forming one whole, which, when proportionate, conſtitutes an object that never yet failed to pleaſe. Moſt of the artiſts, it is probable, knew not, in an unenlightened age, the difference between the Orders; and by blending them capriciouſly together, or by omitting ſome of their eſſential parts, formed indeed a column, not quite unlike the Grecian, but too much diſguiſed and deformed to be recognized among the orders of antiquity. The ornaments of the capitals are whimſical and ugly. The Architrave, the Frieze, and the Cornice, are preſerved in a mutilated, fantaſtic, and irregular form. Under theſe diſadvantages, what little there is of the Grecian Architecture, yields in beauty to the Gothic, when the Gothic appears in its beſt ſtile, genuine and unmixed. The

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mixture of the two ſtyles in the ſame building, which is not uncommon, never has a good effect; ſince the Gothic ſpoils the uniformity of the Grecian, and the Grecian renders the Gothic ſtill more conſpicuouſly inelegant by the contraſt of its own beauty.

The darkneſs, remarkable in religious buildings of this ſtyle, has been admired as an excellence. It is ſaid to throw the mind into that ſerious temper, which is peculiarly adapted to the indulgence of devotion. Such an effect it may perhaps produce, in a great degree, on minds ſubject to ſuperſtition and fanaticiſm, or ſtrongly influenced by a warm imagination; yet, why light, one of the moſt glorious works of creation, ſhould refrigerate the ardour of religion in the rational and diſpaſſionate profeſſor of it, no good reaſon can be aſſigned. The imaginations of all men are, however, affected by very trivial cauſes; and he knows little of human nature, who knows not the power of the imagination over the ſtrongeſt underſtanding: but it is the buſineſs of

philoſophy to aſſert the empire of reaſon over fancy. A religious dimneſs may, perhaps, be deemed neceſſary by the bigotted inhabitants of the convent and the cloiſter, whoſe minds, it is to be feared, are often as dark as their habitations: but light is cheerful, and cheerfulneſs is the diſpoſition of innocence. If guilt is to be taught to feel contrition by the gloomineſs of the temple, it is to be preſumed, that the pious ſorrow will be as tranſient as the emotion which cauſed it, and which, like other productions of the fancy, muſt be of ſhort continuance. That our predeceſſors had no ſuch end in view we may conclude, becauſe the ſmall contracted window is not appropriated to the church, but as often obſerved in the Gothic hall, palace, and private dwelling. We may fairly infer, that the faſhion took its riſe from a defect in taſte and judgement, not from a conviction of its peculiar propriety in religious houſes: and one is almoſt tempted to ſay, that it was a proof of uncommon narrowneſs of mind, to be ſparing of that light which the Author

thor of nature has beſtowed with a liberality as unbounded as his power.

But while we cenſure the contracted taſte, we muſt applaud the enlarged benevolence and unaffected piety of our forefathers. The numerous buildings which they conſecrated to learning, however uncouth their appearance, have afforded retreats and opportunities of improvement to men, who have been at once the ornaments of our nation, and of mankind*. Nor was the alms-houſe, and the hoſpital, leſs capable of adminiſtering comfort and relief to the needy and infirm, becauſe built with little grace or ſymmetry: and the pious heart has poured forth its animated devotion at the rude Gothic ſhrine, with a fervor not to be ſurpaſſed in the Grecian temple. The taſte of our anceſtors is, indeed, no longer a pattern for our own: but their virtues will ever continue to be proper objects of imitation.

* The greateſt men recorded in the annals of our country, it is well known, were educated at one or other of our two univerſities.

The revival of antient literature, was ſoon followed by the revival of true taſte. The latter was a natural conſequence of the former. By an acquaintance with books, the mind was opened, the views enlarged, and curioſity excited. Travelling into foreign countries for the purpoſes of improvement, as well as of war and commerce, became a general practice, and was facilitated by the liberal ſpirit of enquiry which began univerſally to prevail. Our artiſts no ſooner ſaw the Grecian and Roman remains of Architecture, than they caught the idea of beauty, which they realized at their return. The new ſtyle of building, as the antient, at its revival after lying dormant many ages, might be called, was immediately compared with that which then prevailed, and was preferred to it with intuitive diſcernment. It wanted only to be ſeen, to be admired and adopted.

And, indeed, its beauties are of ſo peculiar a kind, as to ſtrike and pleaſe even the uncultivated mind. Like the fabric of the univerſe, it derives much of it

its grandeur from its ſimplicity. Its ornaments are chaſte, elegant, captivating, and never ſuperfluous. They are purpoſely contrived to wear the appearance of utility, and often really contribute to ſupport as well as to adorn. Many of the moſt eſſential parts are, from their ſhape and proportion, as beautiful as thoſe ſpecifically termed ornamental. The column of each Order with all its appendages, and the ſemi-circular, or elliptical arch, without a pointed vertex, ſeem to have ſomething inherent in the form capable of giving pleaſure to the mind, previouſly to the direction of rules, and the diſquiſitions of criticiſm.

The paſſion for novelty and ſingularity is, however, often found to prefer the new and uncommon, even to allowed and eſtabliſhed excellence: and for the gratification of this inborn avidity of human nature, abſurdities, long exploded and relinquiſhed, are often revived, and fanciful and monſtrous innovations introduced. It is not therefore ſurpriſing, however culpable, that in oppoſition to the general

taſte of mankind, many ſtill admire and labour to reſtore the Gothic Architecture; or that tired of Grecian beauty, they endeavour to import, into northern climates, a ſtyle which they call oriental, but which is often mixed and modified with their own groteſque or puerile inventions. Ingenuity of deſign, ſkill in execution, and rarity of appearance, may cauſe even buildings of this fantaſtic form to excite a tranſient pleaſure among the curious, or the uninformed; but it is to be hoped, that the general depravity of taſte, which can render them objects of general approbation, will not ſoon take place. What were this, but a preference of darkneſs to light, of deformity to beauty, of barbariſm to refinement?

Of a revolution ſo fatal to the fine arts, there is indeed little danger. The ſtandard of taſte, that great deſideratum in many of the works of human ingenuity, ſeems to be diſcovered and eſtabliſhed in Architecture. The caprice of a few individuals cannot alter it. Nor is it likely to be loſt, till the ſame darkneſs,

neſs, which once overſpread antient Greece and Rome, ſhall involve all modern Europe—an event too improbable to be apprehended, but by the viſionary.

To pleaſe the eye, has, in the preſent day, become a collateral object in the building deſigned for private habitation, as it ever was in erecting the palace, the ſenate-houſe, and the temple: and though the modern methods of multiplying the works of original artiſts by ſubſtituting ſtucco for ſtone, by caſting in moulds the ornaments which were wont to be wrought by the chiſel, and by uſing gilding for real gold, have rendered the Grecian ſtyle common in buildings, intended for mean purpoſes; yet, however miſplaced and proſtituted, it ſtill retains intrinſic beauty, and ought not to be the leſs eſteemed when it is diſplayed in its proper place by the ingenious architect.

With many ſuch, and their judicious admirers, this nation is and has been honoured. It were eaſy to name thoſe who would adorn the ſchools of Greece, and of antient and modern Italy—but it

is unneceſſary. Their quick-ſighted fellow-citizens have marked their merit; and their own works will be a monument of their fame to late poſterity.

By the efforts of theſe artiſts, conducted according to the moſt graceful taſte, the face of our country is daily acquiring new beauty. Grace without uſe and ſolidity is, indeed, of little permanent value; but when united with theſe, it commands, by deſerving, univerſal applauſe and eſteem. While, in the preſent age, we behold numerous and beautiful edifices ariſing on all ſides, devoted to the purpoſes of religion, of benevolence, of learning, and of liberal enjoyment, we may juſtly congratulate our own nation, that the happy art is diſcovered and practiſed of combining elegance with convenience, and rendering ornament conducive to accommodation.

ESSAY XLII.

ON THE ART OF PRINTING.

THAT the deſire of knowledge for its own ſake, or, as it is called in an advanced ſtate of ſociety, "The Love "of Letters," is an adventitious paſſion unknown to nature, and to be claſſed among the refinements of civilization; is an opinion unſupported by experience, and derogatory from the native dignity of a rational creature. Fancy and ſentiment, the powers of the intellect, and the feelings of the heart, are, perhaps, by nature equally ſtrong and ſuſceptible in the rude Indian, and in the poliſhed member of an eſtabliſhed community. Perhaps theſe ſimilar powers would be equally fit for exertion, and theſe propenſities equally importunate for gratification, if the ſavage were not conſtantly engaged in providing for the neceſſary ſuſtenance, which, without his own interpoſition,

poſition, is commonly ſecured to the philoſopher.

The pupil of nature, under all his diſadvantages, feels the impulſe of a ſpecies of literary curioſity, and ſeeks its ſatisfaction. He poſſeſſes the faculty of memory; he muſt therefore, without the cooperation of his will, remember many of the impreſſions received by the ſenſes: he has a power of reflection which will teach him to reaſon and draw inferences, without deſigning it, from the objects of his experience and obſervation. He feels within himſelf an imagination, capable of recalling paſt ideas of pleaſure and pain, and apt to be delighted by beauty, novelty, and grandeur. Every natural exertion of natural faculties is attended with ſatisfaction. He feels it from the unpremeditated exertions of the mental powers; he tacitly acknowledges it to be congenial to his mind, and of courſe endeavours to repeat, to extend, and to prolong it; but the objects which fall under the notice of his own ſenſes, and his perſonal experience, are inſufficient in number and importance

importance to ſatisfy his capacity. He is led to enquire what paſſed among his forefathers, and in his turn is requeſted by his progeny to communicate his own remarks ſuperadded to the information of his anceſtors.

Such probably is the origin of TRADITION; a mode of communicating knowledge, once univerſal, and ſtill, perhaps, ſubſiſting in the newly diſcovered Iſlands of the Pacific Ocean, on the banks of the Senegal, and at the foot of the Andes. Beneath the ſhade of his plantain, the patriarch Indian ſtill recites the divine origin of his tribe or family, the warlike actions of his anceſtor, and of his own perſonal proweſs. The attentive audience carry away the tale, and ſupply the defects of memory by the aid of imagination. The ſtory ſpreads, time gives it a ſanction, and at laſt it is found to conſtitute the moſt authentic hiſtory, however obſcure and fabulous, of the origin of a nation, after it has emerged from barbariſm, and is become the ſeat of arts and learning.

In the earlieſt and rudeſt ſtate of literature, if we may give that appellation to the efforts of the intellectual faculties where letters are unknown, is often produced the moſt animated, and perhaps moſt perfect, though leaſt artificial, poetry. Hiſtoric truth is, indeed, little regarded, as it is addreſſed to reaſon rather than to fancy; but poetic compoſition appears with marks of genius approaching to inſpiration. From his memory, or his invention, or from both, the ſavage is heard to pour forth the ſong of war, and to warble the notes of love, warm with the ſentiments of a feeling heart, and compenſating for the want of regularity and grace, by the ſtrength and vivacity of natural expreſſion.

If we believe the repreſentations of ſome writers, poems equal in length to the moſt celebrated Epopeas of Greece and Rome, have been handed down without the aid of letters from the remoteſt antiquity to the preſent day; and in our own country, and in our own times, traditionary tales, poetic and proſaic, are known

known to abound in that loweſt claſs among us, who are yet unacquainted with the elements of learning. The tenant of the cottage, ſtupid and incurious as he may appear to the polite obſerver, has his fund of entertaining knowledge, and knows how to enliven the winter evening with tales of fairies, giants, and inchantments, which he believed on the word of his progenitors, and which his hearers receive with equal pleaſure and credulity, intending to tranſmit them to the riſing generation.

The early appearance, and the univerſality of traditional learning, ſeems to eſtabliſh the opinion, that the love of letters is among the firſt and importunate deſires inherent in the human heart. We ſee it believing abſurdity, and admiring nonſenſe; we ſee it bearing one of the ſtrongeſt characteriſtics of natural inclinations, a proneneſs to neglect reaſon in purſuit of gratification.

This ardent love of knowledge which gave riſe to tradition, ſoon invented improvements

provements which ſuperſeded its general neceſſity. It was ſoon found to be attended with great inconveniences, and to be defective in its moſt perfect ſtate. A thouſand important circumſtances muſt neceſſarily elude the moſt retentive memory, and beſide the evils reſulting from the weakneſs of that faculty, and from the general inclination to exaggerate and embelliſh the ſimplicity of truth, the want of written ſtandards to appeal to, afforded conſtant opportunities for impoſition. Uprightneſs of intention, and ſtrength of memory, were not always united in thoſe who undertook the recital of events. Accuracy and juſtneſs of repreſentation were rare, and the civil hiſtory of every people, without a ſingle exception, is, in its firſt periods, dark and incoherent, ſuch as might be expected from oral authority.

The inventor of means to ſupply the defects of memory, and to preclude the opportunity of deceit, it is obvious to conclude, would be conſidered as a great benefactor

benefactor to mankind, and be elevated by the exuberant gratitude of a rude age, above the rank of humanity. To Theuth, the inventor of letters among the Egyptians, and to the ſame perſonage, under the name of Hermes among the Greeks, divine honours were paid; an apotheoſis ſurely as juſtifiable on principles of reaſon, as that of Bacchus the cultivator of the vine, or of Hercules the cleanſer of the Augean ſtable.

To communicate their diſcovery, the inventors of literary ſymbols found it neceſſary to mark them on ſome ſubſtance ſuſceptible of impreſſion or penetration. What that ſubſtance was is a ſubject of curious, but unimportant, enquiry. The original mode of inſcribing the newly diſcovered characters, however conducted, was probably very imperfect; but as it happens in all diſcoveries of momentous conſequence, the idea of it once ſtarted, was purſued with that general ardour and attention, which never fails to produce great improvement. The ſtone, the palm leaf, the biblos or bark of the linden

den tree, the leaden tablet, the papyrus manufactured into the charta, the parchment, and the pugillares, reſpectively ſerved, as progreſſive advancement ſuggeſted, or as convenience required, to receive the written lucubrations of the antient poet, philoſopher, legiſlator, and hiſtorian.

That many of the nobleſt efforts of antient genius, though committed to writing on ſubſtances ſo frail as the papyrus, and ſo ſubject to eraſure as the waxen tablet, ſhould have reached the preſent age, is an event only to be accounted for by ſuppoſing, that their conſpicuous beauties occaſioned uncommon vigilance and ſolicitude in their preſervation.

At a very late period, a ſubſtance formed of macerated linen, was found ſuperior in beauty, convenience and duration, and better adapted to the purpoſes of literature, than all the prior devices of mechanical ingenuity. It derived its name from the flag that grew on the banks of the Nile, which, though it in ſome degree reſembled, it greatly excelled.

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Porous, yet of firm contexture, it admitted the inſcription of characters with a facility, equalled only by the retention with which it preſerved them. By the eaſe with which it was procured and inſcribed, it reſcued the antient authors from the poſſibility of oblivion, and may ſtrictly be ſaid to have formed that monument more durable than braſs, which a celebrated poet propheſied to himſelf with a confidence, juſtified at length by the literal accompliſhment of his prediction.

The buſineſs of tranſcribing the remains of Grecian and Roman literature, became an uſeful, and innocent, and a pleaſing employ to many of thoſe who, in the dark ages, would elſe have pined in the liſtleſs languor of monaſtic retirement. Exempt from the avocations of civil life, incapable of literary exertion from the want of books and opportunities of improvement, they devoted the frequent intervals of religious duty, to the tranſcription of authors whom they often little underſtood. The ſervile office of a mere copyiſt was not diſdained by

thoſe who knew not to invent; and the writers in the ſcriptorium were inſpired with an emulation to excel, in the beauty and variety of their illuminations, the fidelity of their copy, and the multitude of their performances.

But when every letter of every copy was to be formed by the immediate operation of the hand, the moſt perſevering aſſiduity could effect but little. They appear not to have been written with the rapidity of a modern tranſcriber, but with a formal ſtiffneſs, or a correct elegance, equally inconſiſtent with expedition. They were, therefore, rare and conſequently much valued, and whenever ſold, were ſold at a great price. Few, indeed, but crowned and mitred heads, or incorporated communities, were able to procure a number ſufficient to merit the appellation of a *Library*; and even the boaſted libraries of princes and prelates were ſuch, as are now eaſily exceeded by every private collection. To be poor, with whatever ability or inclination, was, at one time, an inſurmountable obſtacle

to literary improvement: and, perhaps, we indulge an unreaſonable acrimony in our general cenſure of Monkiſh ſloth and ignorance, not conſidering that an involuntary fault ceaſes to be blameable; that ignorance is neceſſary where the means of information are ſcarce; and that ſloth is not to be avoided where the requiſites of proper employment are not attainable without great expence, or earneſt ſolicitation.

It was, perhaps, leſs with a view to obviate theſe inconveniences, than from the intereſted motives of deriving greater gain by exacting the uſual price for copies multiplied with more eaſe and expedition, that a new mode was practiſed, derived from the Invention of the Art of Printing, a diſcovery which, of all thoſe recorded in civil hiſtory, is of the moſt important and extenſive conſequence.

That the firſt productions of the preſs were intended to paſs for manuſcripts, we are led to conclude from the reſemblance of the type to the written characters, from the omiſſion of illuminations

which were to be ſupplied by the pen to facilitate the deception, and from the inventor's concealment of his proceſs, ſo far as to incur ſuſpicion of witchcraft or magic, by which alone the firſt obſervers could account for the extraordinary multiplication of the tranſcripts.

But the deceit was ſoon detected. The perfect reſemblance in the ſhape of the letters, in the place and number of the words on every page, the ſingular correctneſs, and above all the numerous copies of the ſame author, inevitably led to a diſcovery of the truth. To conceal it, indeed, was no longer deſired, when reflection had ſuggeſted the great lucrative advantages, and the practicability of multiplying books without end by the proceſs newly invented. It ſoon appeared, though it was not obvious at firſt, that the new mode would be more agreeable to the reader as well as eaſier to the copyiſt, and that printed books would univerſally ſuperſede the uſe of manuſcripts, from a choice founded on judicious preference. The art was ſoon profeſſed

profeſſed as a trade, and the buſineſs of copying, which had once afforded only amuſement or gain to the curious and the idle, became the conſtant employment and ſupport of a numerous tribe of Artiſans, and conſtituted a very conſiderable ſource of mercantile advantage.

Of an art, which, though it had yet acquired but ſmall degrees of perfection, appeared of moſt extenſive utility in religion, in politics, in literature, and even in commerce, no labour has been ſpared to inveſtigate the hiſtory; but unfortunately, the enquirers into the origin of arts, inſtigated by the zeal of minute curioſity to puſh their reſearches too far back, often diſcover them ſo rude, obvious, and inartificial at their commencement, as to reflect very little honour on thoſe whom they oſtentatiouſly exhibit as the earlieſt inventors. Such has been the reſult of the inveſtigations of thoſe, who, diſſatisfied with the commonly received opinions on the date of the invention of Printing, pretend to have diſcovered traces of it many years before the firſt production of

Fauſtus, in 1457: and it is true, that the Speculum Salutis, and a few other books are extant, which are, on good reaſons, judged to have been ſtamped, not printed, long before the erection of a preſs at Mentz: but the mode in which they were executed, like the Chineſe, bears but little reſemblance to the art of Printing properly ſo called: it appears not, by any hiſtorical memoir, to have ſuggeſted the firſt hint of it, and is too imperfect to deſerve notice as even the infant ſtate of this momentous invention.

National pride, like the pride of individuals, is often founded on ſlight or dubious pretenſions. Thus have Germany and Holland contended, with all the warmth of party, for the imaginary honour of giving birth to the inventor of Printing, who after all was probably led to the diſcovery, not by the enlarged views of public utility, but by fortunate circumſtances concurring with the deſire of private and pecuniary advantage: but though the hiſtory of Printing, like all other hiſtories, is in ſome degree obſcure and doubtful

doubtful at its earlieſt period, though Straſburg has boaſted Mentel, and Harlaem Coſter as the inventor; yet is there great reaſon to conclude, that the few arguments advanced in their favour are ſupported only by forgery and falſehood: and we may ſafely aſſert, with the majority of writers, and with the general voice of Europe, that the time of the invention was about the year 1440; the place Mentz, and the perſons Gutenberg, Fauſtus, and Schæffer, in conjunction.

He who wiſhes to trace the art in its gradual progreſs from the wooden and immoveable letter to the moveable and metal type, and to the completion of the whole contrivance, will receive ſatisfactory information from the Annals of the elaborate Mattaire. In the mean time, the eſſayiſt will avoid the repetition of facts already too well known and eſtabliſhed to admit additional illuſtration, and will think himſelf more properly employed in making reflections on the literary, the moral, the political, and the

religious effects which have reſulted from the invention.

It is, indeed, generally true, that the hiſtory of a mechanical art affords but inſipid entertainment to minds once tinctured with the liberality of philoſophy, and the elegance of claſſic literature. It often exhibits manual excellence united with a meanneſs of ſentiment and vulgarity of manners, which unavoidably mingles diſguſt with admiration: but to the truth of this general remark, the annals of typography are a ſingular exception. Many are recorded to have laboured at the preſs, whoſe literary attainments would have done honour to a profeſſorial chair. By their annotations, they illuſtrated the ſenſe and ſpirit of thoſe authors, the letter of whoſe writings they embelliſhed by beautiful and accurate impreſſions.

The names of the Aldi, of Robert and Henry Stephans, of Turnebus, and of many more who united mechanical ingenuity with profound erudition, will ever be remembered with reſpect and gratitude

gratitude by the votary of antient learning. Happily for letters, at a time when the valuable works of antiquity were contained in manuſcripts ſometimes illegibly written, and often mutilated or corrupted, a number of men aroſe whoſe knowledge and ſagacity enabled them to aſcertain and exhibit, by the newly diſcovered art, the genuine reading. Such men were greater benefactors to mankind, than many who have been more celebrated; nor is it a vain glory which Italy derives from her Manutii, Germany from her Froben, France from her Stephani, the Netherlands from their Plantin, and England from her Caxton *.

* Our own learned countryman William Bowyer yields not to any of theſe celebrated printers. The following anecdotes of him are communicated in the words of a perſon with whom he was intimately connected:

"The late Mr. Bowyer, who was born Dec. "17, 1699, may be ſaid to have been initiated in "the art of printing from his birth. His father "(whoſe name was alſo William) was in the fore-"moſt rank of his profeſſion; and his maternal "grandfather (Icabod Dawks) was employed in "printing

Every ſtudent looks back with regret on thoſe times when an Eraſmus corrected

" printing the celebrated Polyglott of Biſhop Wal-
" ton. After having been educated at Headley
" in Surrey, under a ſtrict diſciplinarian from Mer-
" chant Taylors ſchool (the reverend Mr. Bonwicke),
" he was early in life entered at S'. John's College
" Cambridge, with the ſole view of being the bet-
" ter qualified as a printer. Nor were his father's
" expectations fruitleſs. For more than half a cen-
" tury Mr. Bowyer ſtood unrivalled as a learned
" printer, and enjoyed the happineſs of being di-
" ſtinguiſhed by the friendſhip and patronage of
" the moſt eminent men this nation has produced.
" From his preſs have appeared ſome of the moſt
" maſterly productions of this kingdom; nor was
" his pen unknown to the world of letters. The
" work which ſtamps an immortal honour on his
" name is his truly ingenious *Conjectures on the*
" *New Teſtament*; a book in which the profoundeſt
" erudition and the moſt candid criticiſm are happi-
" ly united. Of the ſacred text, not an edition is
" there of his printing but what is valuable. At the
" age of 70, he admitted as an aſſociate in buſineſs
" Mr. Nichols, his ſucceſſor. The pamphlet *On the*
" *Origin of Printing* is the production of the latter,
" except ſuch of the notes as are marked *B.*,
" for which the world is indebted to Mr. Bowyer.

" He

rected what an Aldus printed *; when, like the painter of antiquity, a printer expoſed his production to the paſſenger, and ſolicited cenſure; and when the legiſlature of a great nation, provided by a ſtatute, with a penalty for the correctneſs of publications.

To prefer with implicit attachment all the earlier productions of the art, to the more recent, were to be actuated with the narrow ſpirit of a typographical virtuoſo; yet the truth is, what indeed was to be expected from the ſuperior learning of thoſe who were formerly concerned in the proceſs, they ſurpaſs the more ſplendid

" He died Nov. 18, 1777, having nearly com-
" pleted his 78th year; and, by the laſt ſolemn
" act of his life, bequeathed a beneficent proviſion
" for perpetuating the race of learned printers.

" He was buried at Lowlayton in Eſſex, where there
" is a monument, with an inſcription written by
" himſelf, to his father's memory and his own."

* Scaliger in his Refut. Cic. objects to Eraſmus, that he was corrector of the preſs to Aldus the elder at Venice. Eraſmus denies the charge in general, confeſſing however, that he did correct the preſs when his own works were printed.

editions

editions of later times, in the one great excellence of correctneſs. It is true indeed, that the fungous production of the modern ſcribbler, appears with a ſplendour of paper, and brilliancy of type, unknown in the fifteenth century; and, if the work is written in the vernacular language, and on a familiar ſubject, is perhaps ſufficiently correct. It is true likewiſe, that, conſidering the expedition of the Artiſan, the degree of correctneſs with which the common papers of intelligence appear, is really wonderful, and affords a ſtriking inſtance how much induſtry can effect, when ſtimulated to exertion by the hope of that abundant gain, which our more than Athenian love of political information conſtantly ſupplies. Of ſuch diſpatch, a Plantin would, perhaps, have denied the poſſibility. Books of learning, however, eſpecially when written in the dead languages, are indeed more ſlowly brought forth, but hardly with equal perfection. The miſtaken avarice, and the groſs ignorance of the modern editor, often fruſtrates all the paſt labour of printers, correctors,

rectors, and commentators, who have toiled with aching eyes in the reviſal of proof ſheets, and in the collation of manuſcripts. Amid this lamentable degeneracy, it is happy for mankind, that in the moſt famous aſylum of arts and learning in the known world, a preſs * is conducted by thoſe who, in the edition of the beſt writers, join to the ornamental excellences of exquiſite type and paper, the minuteſt accuracy.

To this antient and venerable ſeat of learning (where, though the clamours for unneceſſary innovations are little regarded, real improvement is ever adopted with avidity), the invention of Printing was introduced ſoon after its firſt appearance. By one of thoſe laudable artifices which prevent private avarice from withholding public benefits, the art was ſtolen from Harlaem and brought to Oxford. Here it ſoon flouriſhed with all the luxuriance of a tree tranſplanted to a ſoil congenial to its nature. The art, no longer to be

* Clarendon Preſs at Oxford.

conſidered

conſidered as a ſojourner, found at length a home beneath the roof of the Sheldonian Theatre, and now poſſeſſes a manſion appropriated to itſelf, and adequate to its dignity. Where indeed with more propriety could it have fixed its reſidence, than in an univerſity whoſe members are acknowledged to be ever qualified to furniſh it with employment, and ſuperintend its operation?

Here, however, while we are conſidering the introduction of Printing into England, not to commemorate the names of Bourchier, Turnour, and Caxton, who were moſt inſtrumental to it, would be an omiſſion equally negligent and ungrateful. Nor ſhould the tribute of praiſe be any longer withheld by neglect * from Earl Tiptoft and Earl Rivers, who, at this period, were reſtorers and patrons of learning in our own country, and who contributed to its advancement in imitation of their contemporary, Pius the

* See Walpole's Cat. of Royal and Noble Authors.

ſecond

ſecond in Italy, both by their munificence and example.

The literary advantages derived from the invention are ſo obvious, that to point them out with all the formality of diſquiſition is unneceſſary.

But the moraliſt, no leſs than the man of letters, finds himſelf intereſted in the conſequences reſulting from the mechanical mode of multiplying the copies of books. To this cauſe, he attributes that change in the manners and ſentiments which has taken place within the interval of a century or two, and which cannot eſcape even ſuperficial obſervation. Philoſophy, once preſerved among a choſen few, with the ſelfiſhneſs of an Alexander, who reprimanded Ariſtotle for divulging the ſecrets of ſcience, has now diffuſed its influence on the mean as well as the great, the gay and the fair as well as the ſevere and ſtudious, the merchant and manufacturer as well as the contemplative profeſſor. Pamphlets and manuals on every ſubject of human enquiry are circulated

culated by the aſſiduous trader, at a ſmall price, among the loweſt ranks of the community, the greateſt part of whom have been furniſhed with the ability of reading by eleemoſynary education. A tincture of letters, which was once rare and formed a ſhining character, has pervaded the maſs of the people, and in a free country like our own, where it is not checked in its operation by political reſtraints, has produced remarkable effects on the general ſyſtem of morality. Much good has reſulted from it: happy, if it had not been mixed with that characteriſtic alloy of human happineſs, much evil. Learning thus communicated to the vulgar, has taught the ſavage ferocity of groſs ignorance to yield to gentleneſs and humanity; but it has alſo ſuperinduced a general indolence, refinement, and falſe delicacy. It has been the means of exhibiting to the beſt advantage, the image of virtue in her natural beauty; but it has alſo held up to view the meretricious charms of vice in the falſe ornaments ſuperadded by a corrupt imagination.

tion. It has been a ſteady light to lighten men in the path of truth; but it has alſo been an *ignis fatuus* leading them into the mazes of error, and plunging them at laſt into the depths of miſery. If it has often tempted us to boaſt of living in an enlightened age, it has no leſs frequently induced us to regret the old times of ignorant, but innocent ſimplicity. If we ſometimes look back with a mixture of ſcorn and pity on the unlettered ages that preceded us; we alſo ſometimes confeſs ourſelves ready to renounce the pride of ſuperior knowledge for the ſolid happineſs of that national probity, which, though it may not have receded, has not kept pace with our progreſs in ſcientific improvement. Here, however, the old maxim will be ſuggeſted to every one, that a good argument againſt the uſe of a thing, cannot be drawn from its abuſe. It will at the ſame time be remembered, that the preſent times are ever ſeen through the fallacious mediums of prejudice and paſſion; and that the cenſures of the ſatiriſt may not ariſe from

real degeneracy, but that common propenſity which has, in all ages, given riſe to invectives againſt the prevailing manners. If it is true, that improvement in knowledge is a natural and laudable object of human deſires, the more general that improvement, the happier and more perfect is human nature, and the more eſtimable that art from which it is principally derived.

But however equivocal the effects of the univerſal diſſemination of literature, on the morals of thoſe who cannot judge and ſelect with the ſame eaſe with which they can procure books; there is no doubt of their being beneficial among others whoſe judgment is directed by liberal culture, and whoſe ſentiments are undepraved by faſhionable diſſipation. Before the introduction of Printing indeed, the ſtudent, who revolted at the idea of languiſhing in the ſloth of Monkery, had ſcarcely any ſcope for his induſtry and talents, but in the puerile perplexities of a ſcholaſtic philoſophy, as little adapted to call forth the virtues of

of the heart, as to promote valuable knowledge: but ſince that important æra in the annals of learning, every individual, even the pooreſt of the Muſes' train, has been enabled to obtain, without difficulty, the works of thoſe great maſters in practical and ſpeculative ethics, the Greek and Roman philoſophers. He is taught by the ſame inſtructors who formed a Xenophon and a Scipio, and can hold converſe, in the retirements of his chamber, with the celebrated ſages of antiquity, with nearly the ſame advantages as if he actually ſat with Socrates beneath the ſhade of his plane tree, walked with Plato in the Lyceum, or accompanied Cicero in his retreat at Tuſculum.

Whatever tends to diffuſe new light on the underſtandings of a whole people, or to effect a change in the general ſyſtem of manners, ſoon produces a ſimilar revolution in their political character. Airy fabrics, which, when ſeen through the miſts of ignorance, were ſuppoſed to be realities, vaniſhed at the light of learning,

as the inchantment is diſſolved by the operation of the Taliſman. The ſun of ſcience aroſe, the proſpect cleared around, and they who had ſhuddered at the ideal phantoms of the night, ventured to walk forth and examine every object that ſolicited attention. The prejudices on the ſubject of civil government, formed by ignorance and foſtered by the policy of power, when once the art of Printing had multiplied books and roufed the ſpirit of enquiry, ſoon gave way to the dictates of inſtructed reaſon. The natural rights of mankind became well underſtood, the law of nations was attended, too implicit obedience was neither exacted on the one part with the ſame rigour as before, nor paid on the other with equal ſervility. What remained of the feudal inſtitutions could not long ſubſiſt, when more liberal ideas of the nearer equality of mankind were imbibed from books, and when a great degree of dignity and power was attainable, not only by birth and riches, but by mere literary eminence. The diſtinction of Vaſſal

Vaſſal and Lord ſoon ceaſed to be the only one in the community, when men were led by the eaſe with which books were procured, to aſpire after the fine arts, philoſophy, and erudition. Such ſtudies infuſed a noble generoſity of ſpirit, which ſcorned to pay an abject homage to ignorant opulence. Ignorant opulence, indeed, could not maintain, or even exact by force, that truly valuable reſpect which is naturally due and cheerfully paid to perſonal dignity. Men by reading were led to reflect, and by reflection diſcovered, that they had been under an error when they looked up to their governors as to a ſuperior Order of Beings; but at the ſame time they learned the happineſs of living under a well regulated conſtitution, the duty of obedience in return for protection, and the political neceſſity of ſubordination. Hiſtory, and treatiſes of politics, ſuggeſted juſt notions of civil ſociety, and a ſenſe of expediency produced at length that voluntary acquieſcence which was once exacted by pretenſions to divine right, or by the

immediate interpoſition of authority. The luſt of dominion which diſgraced the iron reign of the ſullen, unlettered tyrant, was ſucceeded, in the enlightened father of his people, by a ſpirit of benevolence and philoſophical moderation. That power which was once placed on the ſandy foundation of popular prejudice and fear, when thoſe fears and prejudices were diſſipated by free diſquiſition, acquired an eſtabliſhment on the baſis of reaſon. Nor let it be deemed idle ſpeculation to attribute theſe ſalutary conſequences to the Invention of Printing, ſince to him, who attentively conſiders all its remote as well as proximate effects, it will appear fully adequate to their production. When all ranks of people on a ſudden were enabled to exert with vigour the faculty of thinking, which had only lain dormant for want of opportunity, the effect on the moral and political world muſt be as ſtriking, as that which takes place in the phyſical at the return of day after night, and ſpring after winter.

Thus

Thus has Fauſtus of Mentz, by an art invented and exerciſed with views of private emolument, ultimately contributed more to the happineſs of empires, and cauſed more important events in their hiſtory, than all the efforts of the renowned conquerors and lawgivers of antiquity. That the ſame art which has produced theſe ſalutary conſequences, has alſo been the means of encouraging licentiouſneſs, of animating ſedition, and kindling the flames of civil war, is to be attributed to that lamentable condition of human affairs which is obſerved to counterbalance every good, with a proportion of concomitant evil.

To the art of Printing, however, it is acknowledged, we owe the Reformation. It has been juſtly remarked, that if the books of Luther had been multiplied only by the ſlow proceſs of the hand-writing, they muſt have been few, and would have been eaſily ſuppreſſed by the combination of wealth and power: but, poured forth in abundance from the preſs, they ſpread over the land with the rapidity of

an inundation, which acquires additional force from the efforts uſed to obſtruct its progreſs. He who undertook to prevent the diſperſion of the books once iſſued from the preſs, attempted a taſk as arduous as the deſtruction of the Hydra. Reſiſtance was vain, and religion was reformed: and we who are chiefly intereſted in this happy revolution muſt remember, amidſt the praiſes beſtowed on Luther, that his endeavours had been ineffectual, unaſſiſted by the invention of Fauſtus.

How greatly the cauſe of religion has been promoted by the art, muſt appear when it is conſidered, that it has placed thoſe ſacred books in the hand of every individual, which, beſides that they were once locked up in a dead language, could not be procured without great difficulty. The numerous comments on them of every kind, which tend to promote piety and to form the chriſtian philoſopher, would probably never have been compoſed, and certainly would not have extended far their beneficial influence, if typography had ſtill been unknown. By

that

that art, the light, which is to illuminate a dark world, has been placed in a ſituation more advantageous to the emiſſion of its rays: but if it has been the means of illuſtrating the doctrines, and inforcing the practice of religion, it has alſo, particularly in the preſent age, ſtruck at the root of piety and moral virtue, by propagating opinions favourable to the materialiſt, the ſceptic, and the voluptuary. It has enabled modern authors wantonly to gratify their avarice, their vanity, and their miſanthropy, in diſſeminating novel ſyſtems ſubverſive of the dignity and happineſs of human nature: but though the perverſion of the art is lamentably remarkable in thoſe volumes which iſſue, with offenſive profuſion, from the vain, the wicked, and the hungry, yet this good reſults from the evil, that as truth is great and will prevail, ſhe muſt derive freſh luſtre by diſplaying the ſuperiority of her ſtrength in the conflict with ſophiſtry.

Thus the art of Printing, in whatever light it is viewed, has deſerved reſpect and

and attention. From the ingenuity of the contrivance, it has ever excited mechanical curioſity; from its intimate connection with learning, it has juſtly claimed hiſtorical notice; and from its extenſive influence on morality, politics, and religion, it is now become a ſubject of the moſt important ſpeculation.

But however we may felicitate mankind on the invention, there are, perhaps, thoſe who wiſh, that, together with its compatriot art of manufacturing gunpowder, it had not yet been brought to light. Of its effects in literature, they aſſert, that it has increaſed the number of books, until they diſtract rather than improve the mind; and of its malignant influence on morals, they complain that it has introduced a falſe refinement incompatible with the ſimplicity of primitive piety and genuine virtue. With reſpect to its literary ill conſequences, it may be ſaid, that though it produces to the world an infinite number of worthleſs publications, yet true wit and fine compoſition will ſtill retain their value,

and

and it will be an eaſy taſk for critical diſcernment to ſelect theſe from the ſurrounding maſs of abſurdity: and though, with reſpect to its moral effects, a regard to truth extorts the confeſſion, that it has diffuſed immorality and irreligion, divulged with cruel impertinence the ſecrets of private life, and ſpread the tale of ſcandal through an empire; yet theſe are evils which will either ſhrink away unobſerved in the triumphs of time and truth over falſehood, or which may, at any time, be ſuppreſſed by legiſlative interpoſition.

The LIBERTY OF THE PRESS is a ſubject not to be touched upon, but with trembling caution. Every ſtudent muſt abhor the thought of erecting the tribunal of a ſtar-chamber in the republic of letters; every lover of his country muſt reject with diſdain the propoſal of ſilencing the voice of truth by the menace of authority: but, at the ſame time, every true friend to learning and mankind, who, free from the enthuſiaſm of party, underſtands their real intereſt, would rejoice

to

to ſee the day when the advantages of the Liberty of the Preſs ſhall be unalloyed with thoſe evils of its licentiouſneſs, which, without ſome expedient of controul, will in a degree prevail, as long as there are, on one hand, indigent and avaricious publiſhers, and on the other, factious and unprincipled readers.

But innovations in a particular intimately connected with civil liberty, will ever be guarded againſt in a free country, with all the vigilance of jealous circumſpection. Men will often patiently ſupport the preſent evil, the nature and extent of which is aſcertained by experience, rather than incur the hazard of a future detriment, which may poſſibly outweigh the beneficial ends propoſed. If then the unreſtrained uſe of the preſs is, as it has been commonly termed, the palladium of liberty, may it never be taken from us by fraud or force; and perhaps the evils reſulting from the abuſe of this privilege are of that kind, which, when permitted to take their courſe, ultimately remedy themſelves: for it is certain, that there may

may be a period, and perhaps our own times approach to it, when the petulant licentiousness of public prints and pamphlets becomes too contemptible to gain attention, and therefore fails of producing a malignant effect. Avarice will cease to publish, when men are too wise to purchase; faction and vanity will be silent, when they no longer find an audience: but penal and coercive measures are known to give weight to the pest nonsense of sedition, by alarming that attention which it could not otherwise excite, and to occasion the evils intended to be obviated; as the means used to extinguish a flame sometimes increase its violence.

But referring the discussion of this complicated subject to legislative wisdom, we may venture to express an honest wish without danger of presumption; and surely all the good and enlightened part of mankind will sympathize in the desire, that the time may not be distant, when the qualities of the heart shall be cultivated with the same general ardour as the powers of the understanding; when the

the affectation of ſingularity, and the love of money, ſhall no longer multiply treatiſes tending to teach the people a falſe philoſophy, an erroneous belief, or a factious conduct; when the Art of Printing ſhall no more be perverted to embelliſh vice and juſtify folly, but operating in the accompliſhment of its proper purpoſes, at once promote the intereſt, which cannot indeed without unnatural violence be ſeparate, of ſound learning and unſophiſticated virtue.

THE END.

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